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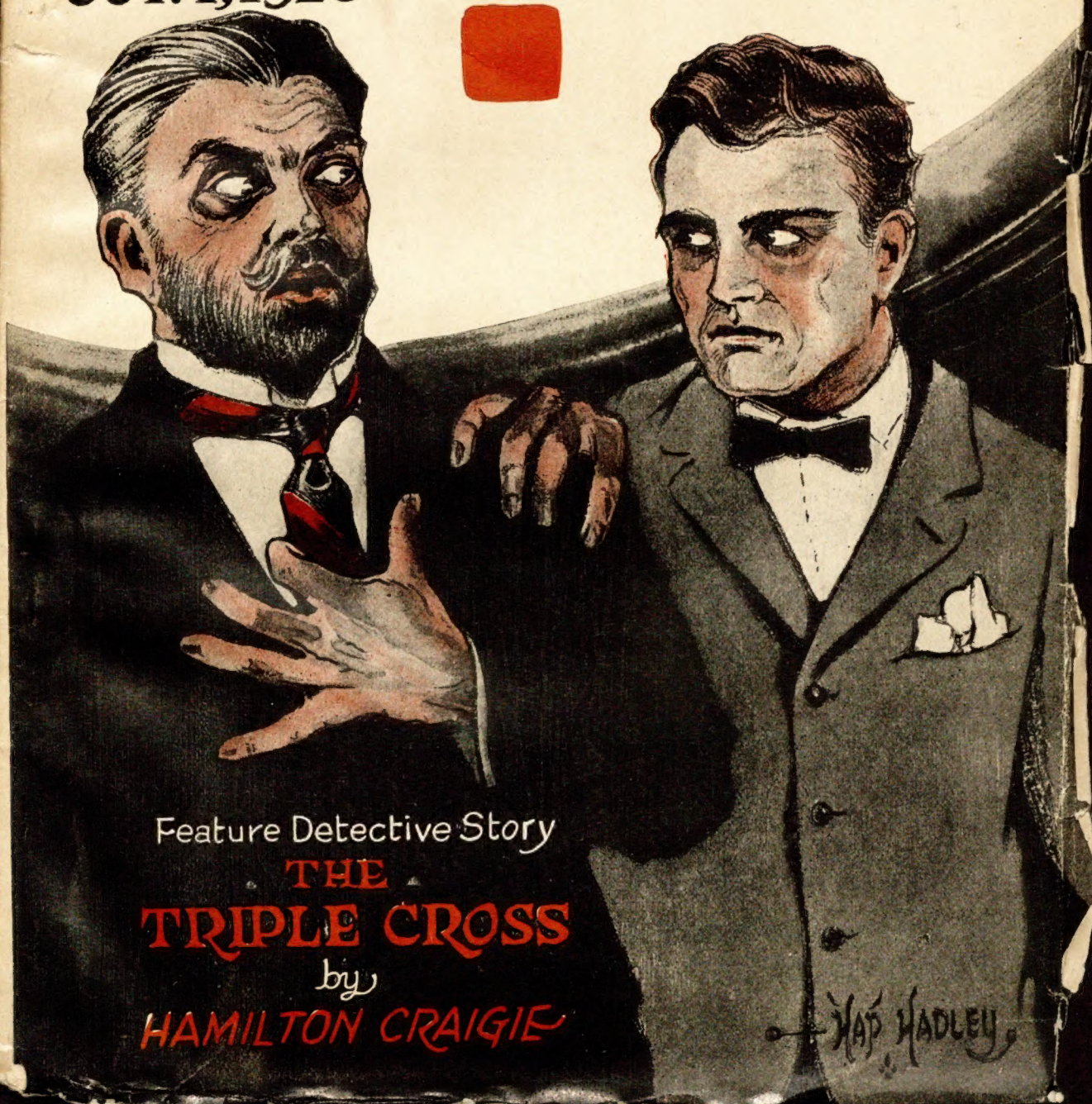
DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

OCT. 1, 1923 NO. 141



Feature Detective Story

THE TRIPLE CROSS

by

HAMILTON CRAIGIE

HAP HADLEY

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. VI OCTOBER 1, 1923 No. 141

ISSUED TWICE A MONTH

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Published by Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d St., New York.

Harry E. Wolff, President; L. F. Wilzin, Treasurer; Charles E. Nylander, Secretary.

LU. SENARENS, Editor.

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Subscription Price: Domestic, Single Copy, 10 Cents; Domestic, Yearly, $2.50; Canada, $2.75; Foreign, $3.00.

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THE TRIPLE CROSS

By Hamilton Craigie

CHAPTER ONE

TOUCH AND GO

HARVEY GILLINDER, from his position at the cashier's wicket, watched the hands of the great clock as they moved steadily onward to the hour of three.

Five minutes more and the Sedalia National would close its huge bronze-and-steel-barred doors for the day, the last deposit made, the last check honored, and after that——

A thin smile, a brooding, introspective gleaming of the cashier's pale eyes came and went as he glanced downward at the package at his feet. It was a rough paper parcel, thrust carelessly in among a pile of odds and ends, but in it was twenty thousand in hard cash; Gillinder had put it there no later than that morning, and it was only a beginning.

Because, when at six o'clock he would leave his labors for the day, that package would be but one of a number of others that would bear it company—five hundred thousand altogether; that would be the amount of Gillinder's loot.

Business had been slack. Gillinder, moistening his thin lips in anticipation of that which was to come, reviewed his plans in a mental lightning flash that found them perfect. Another hour and a second packet would go to join the first; a third, after that there was a racing automobile to take him to the Canadian border, where, his black beard shaved off, he would disappear for a little until the first hue and cry had lessened to a perfunctory pursuit. After that——

He grinned as a cat grins, without mirth, glancing downward at the package at his feet, and then abruptly outward through the wicket, his face drained of its color to a pasty gray.

A man was coming toward him across the floor. Keen-faced, he had a gimlet eye and a mouth unsmiling and grim; Gillinder would have known that face among a thousand — Cheevers, the bank examiner. A man walked beside him, a detective acquaintance whom he had met by mere chance outside the bank.

The cashier stared in a hypnosis of fascination as the detective paused at a desk and the examiner went onward to the rear. Gillinder heard the door close, slam shut upon the examiner like a summons of doom. He—Gillinder—was trapped. Already his

defalcation would run into the thousands; the record of it would be an open book for Cheevers, and after that the deluge.

He saw the detective write in his notebook for a moment; then the officer left the bank.

Moistening his dry lips, Gillinder stiffened where he stood, his gaze in a kind of sightless staring outward upon the tesselated floor and the sunlight barred and splottered upon it. He was trapped. He heard behind him the hurried rustle of feet, the thick voice of Harriman, the bank president. Cheevers's arrival had been in the nature of a surprise, but there was nothing unusual in that.

And then out of the tail of his eye he was aware of the bank examiner at his elbow; he heard his voice, dry, precise, matter-of-fact:

"Oh, Mr. Gillinder, just a moment."

Gillinder turned, his face on a sudden lined and old. His brain, racing like a squirrel in a treadmill, quested this way and that, but there was no escape. His peculations would be apparent in the first half of the examination; old lynx-eye Cheevers would see to that; because the cashier had not counted upon any particular cleverness in covering his trail; he had gambled for all or nothing; but for the arrival of the examiner to-day he would have been a fugitive, but a fugitive the richer for five hundred thousand in cold cash lining his pockets for the getaway. But now—it was too late.

He turned slowly to face his nemesis, when at a low voice at the wicket he turned back again with a muttered word. And then, at the dark face staring into his, he froze, for the man at the wicket had the hard features of a rough-neck crook.

He heard some words in a hissing guttural, even as, in a queer blending of relief and a crawling fear, he beheld the black muzzle of an automatic leveled in his face by the man outside the wicket:

"Stick 'em up, you! An' make it snappy! Now——"

What followed Gillinder could never clearly remember. There came a barking order from the bandit at the wicket. Dimly Gillinder could see that the doorway was vomiting armed men, dark-faced, predatory; they boiled in, guns held high, as, clear above the clang and rattle, there came the staccato explosions of a motor from without.

As in a dream Gillinder was aware that the gray-lad "special" policeman rounding the corner of the long cage had flung up an arm; flame streaked from his pistol with the motion. Then he had pitched face downward to the tiles as the leader of the bandits, whirling, had fired from the hip.

Gillinder, white-faced and shaking, saw a bulky figure uprear beside him, his hand holding a gun. It was Cheevers, the bank examiner. Then, so close that the wind of its passing kissed his cheek, a slug drove past Gillinder with the heavy crash of the report. Cheevers sighed, collapsing backward in an aimless huddle of sprawling limbs as the gang of gunmen in a solid phalanx charged toward the cage.

The remainder of the bank's force, dumb in the face of the sudden tragedy, moved in a fumbling silence at the bandit leader's crisp orders. Bills, specie, gold—they filled a sack now in the hands of the grim-faced leader; then at a snarling order the marauders were on the wing. A door slammed, gears meshed, the motor roared with a sudden clamor as, rounding the corner on two wheels, they were away.

Gillinder leaned weakly against the counter, and there was a frozen silence; then, as his gaze sought that package of money on the floor, there came a single sharp cry of

"Fire!"

Something—the impact of a bullet, a lighted cigarette unseen in the confusion—had done it. As the cashier looked behind him, where the ledgers had been laid out for inspection, there came a swift, crackling roar.

Cheevers's body had been carried out, and with it the special's; of that much the cashier was certain. But as he raced with the rest into the street Gillinder knew and exulted in the knowledge that just behind him, where before there had been evidence, now there was a roaring inferno of destroying flame to hide the proof of his pilfering.

Standing on the curb among the rest, he watched as the firemen worked desperately to save that which was already lost. Then, turning away, his bearded face, with its pointed nose and sharp, vulpine mouth, glowed suddenly.

Cheevers was apparently dead; the evidence had been destroyed; and, secure, where he had thrust it in an inner pocket, there now reposed that innocent paper packet, where in the confusion he had retrieved it from the floor. A moment before disgrace, imprisonment, a fate worse than death had waited for him at the lifting of a finger. Now he was free; he was no man's man; he was rich—and the devil take the hindmost!

The only anxiety was the detective he had seen walking into the bank with the examiner. What was the officer doing here? Had any suspicions been aroused against Gillinder? He was soon to know.

CHAPTER TWO

FACE TO FACE!

AT the corner of Perry and West Fourth street Harvey Gillinder paused in hesitation and with a distinct unease. It was coming on to evening of a crisp fall day, and a wind, rising, piped eerily at door and shutter, like a voice of the lost and calling, there in the odorous dusk.

Gillinder had come to New York following a short trip to Ybor City, where he had had a little property. Canada had not called to him since the destruction of the evidence and the death of the one man who might have discovered it; therefore it was natural enough that the metropolis should have been his first port of call. The detective who first aroused his suspicions seemed to have vanished.

That twenty thousand, although he had handled millions in his time, was more money than he had ever had to spend; it was better, he told himself, than half a million, with himself as a marked man, a fugitive in the waste places of the earth. He had always had the reputation of a careful man; no one would question his right to a vacation; he could spend as much or as little of that twenty "grand" as his fancy listed.

He had taken a room in a small "family" hotel in the West Forties, whence, on this first evening of his arrival, he had sallied forth in search of such diversion as the metropolis had to offer. Now, as he halted at the corner of the street, it came to him abruptly that he was lost.

It was a chancy neighborhood, even by day. Between the evening and the night the cobbled street showed merely as a darkling glimmer beneath the black pall of the sky. The street lights were not yet on. Gillinder could not tell in what direction lay his hotel; he knew merely that somewhere in the "village" there was a certain resort frequented on occasion by seekers after adventure. He had heard it mentioned as far west as Chicago.

"You'll get action at the Pink Parrot," his informant had told him with a queer, half-ironical expression. "Action—and then some."

Gillinder had not been fool enough to carry that twenty thousand dollars about him all in one lump. For a bank cashier he was a big man and hard-muscled. Small town habitué or not, he was not concerned as to his ability to take care of himself; he would have his little fling, for a time, at any rate; after that let the future take care of itself.

It was then that as he stood irresolute at the corner of the street he saw the looming figure of a patrolman, the brass buttons winking in the radiance from the corner arc; it had flashed on even as Gillinder had taken a quick, forward step. And for a moment, as the advancing figure of the officer drew level under the light, Gillinder had a sudden, illogical, absurd sensation that somehow, after all, his guilt was known; that in a moment now he would feel that heavy hand on his shoulder, hear the grim voice:

"I want you, Harvey Gillinder; we'll take a little walk."

But such an idea was a manifest ab-

surdity of course. He was getting jumpy; that was it, of course.

He turned as the policeman came up.

"Can you direct me to the Pink Parrot, officer?" he asked. "It's somewhere in the neighborhood, isn't it?"

The policeman bent upon him a curious look; for a moment he appeared to hesitate; then, gesturing backward along the way that he had come:

"A block down an' th' first turn to your right," he growled, his gaze upon Gillinder in a curious, speculative look.

Gillinder, thanking the man, went onward slowly, the remembrance of the patrolman's expression jibing now with the look of the man back there in Sedalia who had first told him of the place. And somehow, as he went onward, he could feel in fancy the hard gaze of the policeman boring into his back.

But in a moment he had turned the corner, and there, before him, was the cabaret; there could be no mistaking it.

Entering through a low doorway, Gillinder found himself in a long, low room thick with tobacco smoke, at the far end a raised dais, upon which a six-piece orchestra broke into a crashing dissonance of frenzied sound.

But the place seemed orderly enough. Seating himself at a table against the wall, he surveyed the scene, hectic, high-colored, instinct with life and movement, and yet, somehow, disappointing.

Gillinder did not know just what he had expected to see, but he was conscious of a sense of disappointment. For, beneath the tinsel, the place was drab enough; it was like a dozen other such places that he had frequented on occasion in Chicago, in Indianapolis; there were the same faces, the same sodden laughter, clink of glass, acrid tang of cigarette smoke, mounting to the rafters in flat layers under the lights.

At the table next to his there was the usual couple—the man, sleek, slim, hair roached backward in a decadent aping of the latest mode; his companion just another of the moths drawn nightly to this temple of Terpsichore. Gillinder's gaze passed over them, to rest upon another man seated at a table a little to his left. His burning eyes were fixed intently upon Gillinder for a moment, then he abruptly arose and left the cabaret. Gillinder shivered, for he had recognized him as the detective who had been with Cheevers, the bank examiner.

A man sat with his back half turned to Gillinder; he had the wide, sloping shoulders and the bullet head of a wrestler. As the detective disappeared Gillinder could see the blue-black of the man at the tables, his heavy chin, the curving clutch of the thick fingers holding a glass that, by comparison, was like a thimble.

Abruptly this man turned his head, and Gillinder was conscious of something like a shock.

For the face was like the face of a tiger—sloping forehead. green eyes like pinpoints of pale flame, grim, trap-like mouth—a face somehow the deadlier for the tight-fitting, ultra-fashionable coat, trousers creased to a knife-edge of perfection, rich silk cravat with its single blazing stone.

But it was not the unusual appearance of the man himself that brought from Gillinder a quick, hissing intake of the breath, for across that face, livid under the lights, as the pale eyes bored into his, there ran a frightful scar, a transverse, curving cicatrice, from eyebrow to chin.

Gillinder had last seen that face with its frightful scar staring at him through the cashier's wicket at the Sedalia National. He was the leader of the gang of crooks who had robbed the bank and had given him the chance to make his get-away.

CHAPTER THREE

FALLEN AMONG THIEVES

THERE could be no doubt of it; it was the bandit leader. Gillinder had vaguely gathered that the Pink Parrot was something other than a mere unit in the city's night life, but that it might be a rendezvous for crooks he had not considered. This, then, was the explanation for the

look with which he had been favored by his informant in Sedalia—the odd gleaming in the hard eyes of the patrolman at the corner of the street. The place was, in effect, a hang-out for dips, strong-arms—the flotsam and jetsam of an underworld with which the embezzler had been familiar hitherto only in books.

Imaginative fiction writers had peopled that half-world with shadowy shapes of terror and vague menace; now, perhaps, he was to see whether or not the half of it was true. But, as a matter of fact, the tales that he had read had been something less than the truth; presently he was to discover something of the grim reality of it, whether he would or no.

As it chanced it was not merely coincidence which had brought him face to face with the fellow with the scar. Scarcely a knight of the knuckle-duster or the black-jack but made the Pink Parrot his port of call at one time or another upon arrival in the metropolis. But now, with those gray-green eyes boring into his, Gillinder shrank, voiceless, in his seat.

And then, as nothing happened, he took heart of grace as inspiration seized him with the thought—there was a big reward posted for the apprehension of the looters of the Sedalia National; for information alone it would touch twenty thousand cold. Somehow, some way, he would scrape acquaintance with the fellow—how, it was not precisely clear—play the sleuth after a fashion; perhaps, through the leader, round up the others, and then, with the information in his pocket, collect the reward.

It was a stimulating idea, but the knowledge that the murderer of Cheevers and of the special policeman was sitting there, removed from him only by three feet of space, the width of an iron table, was not exactly reassuring.

Gillinder was a big man, as we said before, well-muscled and in fair condition. Under ordinary circumstances he could take care of himself in any chance encounter involving merely a stand-up give-and-take with an antagonist who would fight fair.

But this bleak-faced killer, with the eye of ice and the thin-lipped, sneering mouth —that would be another matter. For if he thought—if he so much as suspected that the cashier was—who he was—the latter's life would not be worth a moment's purchase.

With this new and dismaying realization Gillinder, his face a pallid mask, froze in his seat as the bandit, moving as a panther moves, soundless and swift, swung sidewise abruptly in his chair.

The veins in his neck and temples gorged with the pressure, his cold eyes narrowed upon the embezzler now with a malevolent, swift scrutiny. As the cashier stared dumbly straight before him there came a leaping shadow at his back.

Spread-eagled under the lights a figure had arisen from behind a tall palm at his left; even as Gillinder watched a hand holding a long knife flashed downward past him with the speed of light.

Gillinder saw the red gleam of that thrusting steel leveled at the bandit's heart and his own arm jerked upward, his fingers closing on the attacker's thick, hairy wrist.

There came a jerk, a straining heave, a sudden quick explosion of movement, a grating curse. The bandit's assailant, caught in mid-stride, staggered, lurched, as the knife clanged downward to the table-top; then, whirling, he was away, as the object of his attack, leaping to his feet, had kicked his chair backward with a slatting crash.

Oaths sounded, the thin scream of a woman, the crash of glass, then the slamming of a heavy door and the quick roar of a motor. It was over.

Gillinder's action had been spontaneous, almost without conscious thought. Now he looked up to see the dark face down bent to his.

The bandit's eyes gleamed, but there was no recognition in them, merely a sardonic flicker which, as the embezzler looked, widened to a grin.

"T'anks, bo!" he said. "Now, what'll y' have—hey? It's on me, fella; now, what'll it be?"

Gillinder, faced with his opportunity, could only nod dumbly. He found himself seated opposite the gunman, who plainly

was a personage in the cabaret. And presently the latter, his speech slurring with his potations, turned to Gillinder with a turgid oath:

"I like you, bo," he said thickly. "You're all right with me." He leaned close, his hard eyes narrowing to slits. "Now, what's your lay?"

For a split-second the cashier hesitated. Then he contrived a slightly reckless air.

"Fancy sledge-swinger," he whispered. He had heard the designation somewhere; a fancy sledge-swinger was a man who knocked off the knobs of safes with a short-handled mason's hammer; it was the first thing that had come into his head.

His companion grinned. "Well, you don't look like it, fella," he said, "but you're some smooth worker, I'll tell the world, an' a good husky at that!"

He nodded heavily, getting unsteadily to his feet, where, as he stood swaying, he bent upon Gillinder an owlish look.

"Th' hay f'r me, old-timer," he said mumblingly. "But I dunno 'f I c'n make it—alone. But say, lissen; I'm all in—see? You give me an elbow—ha? It's only two blocks."

Gillinder could only assent. With the gunman's hand upon his shoulder he moved slowly toward the door, but as they went outward into the night he shivered. The feel of those fingers, iron-hard, the queer gleaming in the deep-set eyes, the knowledge of the money in his pocket, the watch that he carried—all conspired to fill him with a vague and sinister foreboding, a nameless fear. Across the street the detective was lurking in a doorway, intently watching the two men.

Suppose—just suppose the bandit were not as helpless as he seemed, thought Gillinder. He had left the bulk of his money at the hotel, but there was five hundred in cold cash in his inner pocket, to say nothing of his watch.

They started down the street, and the detective glided after them like a shadow.

With those iron fingers on his shoulder Gillinder could not turn back, and presently, pausing in the entrance of a dark tenement on a foul and dark side street, the door swung inward without sound. Before him a narrow flight ran upward, where, at the stair-head, a single gas-jet, fluttering in the draft, made of the two men one monstrous leaping shadow, bending and swaying upon floor and wall.

At the head of the flight the gunman, pausing at a door curiously covered with a fine wire mesh, gave a peculiar, rubbing rap; it opened to a blaze of light and the figures of five men seated at a table.

Gillinder gave a sort of whistling croak.

For the five men at the table, hard-bitten, sinister, were—he was certain of it—the five who, with their leader, had, not a week in the past, looted the Sedalia National.

Gillinder had an excellent memory for faces, and the bandits had not been masked. He made one single backward step, but a hand between his shoulder-blades, thrusting, had pushed him headlong through the door. He heard behind him the echo of a grating laugh as the door slammed shut, following it the impact of a heavy jolt. A man rose upward almost in his face as a voice snarled on a low, vibrant note:

"Well, well, if it ain't our old sidekick, the bank cashier, come to make a little call! Now, what do you know about that?"

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GHOST

GILLINDER at that moment knew fear. It turned his bones to water with the sight of that encircling, avid ring of faces hemming him in. Now they growled together in a savage chorus; the sound had nothing human in it as the embezzler, backing against the wall, stood fumbling his loose lips, his broad face with its heavy jowls a mottled, unhealthy gray.

Under the lights the savage faces stared into his, bleak with purpose.

The bandit leader had known him all along.

It was a trap—and he had walked into it, eyes open.

Presently the end would come.

His eyes, with the desperate, glazed staring of a hunted animal, beheld those faces as in a crimson mist; they wavered, receded, steadied as there came a roaring voice:

"This guy—he's wise! Now, let's get it over with!"

A man had arisen. He had the three-cornered, pointed visage of a brute; mouth agrin, he extended a hand. In it was a heavy, long-bladed knife.

The embezzler, his blood turned suddenly to ice, saw that beast-like paw, hairy, malformed, with its dirty, broken nails. Then, as he shrank voiceless against the wall, he was aware on a sudden of a startling interruption.

A tall figure had thrust itself suddenly between them. Gillinder could not have said how it was done, but even as he looked there came a sudden wrench, a twist, the knife dropped upon the boards as the tall man snarled:

"Easy does it, Denver! Now, you know *me*. This bird'll keep! And, anyway, you're too dam' handy with that prod of yours!"

The man called "Denver" turned upon the man Gillinder saved a poisonous look. The leader laughed out of the corner of his mouth. Gillinder, glancing at him, saw that his drunkenness had, as he now suspected, been assumed, but he took heart of grace as the leader spoke:

"Frisco's all right, Denver," he said. "An' this guy"—pointing to Gillinder—"he saved my life at the Parrot. I owe him something for that. Slow an 'easy does it! Now——"

He turned to Gillinder, his obsidian eyes expressionless, like pieces of volcanic glass.

"Now, you fella, come clean. Denver'd 'a' croaked y' if it hadn't been for Frisco here. We know you, bo. Now, if we let you drift, what's to stop you squealin'—ha? Takin' your story to th' first harness bull you run up against? Speak your little piece!"

Gillinder opened his mouth, but for a moment he could find no words. He swallowed twice, moistening his stiff lips; then all at once he began to speak, the words tumbling over each other in their haste:

"You men, listen! You're safe with me, I tell you! And—and I'll tell you why!"

He paused, glancing nervously from face to face. For a moment in the eyes of the man called Frisco he thought to detect a pale gleaming like a sudden icy fire. In the sudden silence he fumbled, recovered; then in a hoarse, eager undertone the words came with a sort of hissing violence:

"I—I robbed that bank, if you want to know. I was ready for the get-away when you beat me to it! But it was only ten thousand; you guys got the rest."

He spread his hands wide, palms upward.

It was characteristic of Gillinder that he had reduced the amount by half. His small eyes glittered, the mean mouth a thin, anxious line, as the leader of the bandits spoke.

"Well, now, what do you know about that?" he said in amused tones; then he laughed. The tension broke abruptly with the sound. From somewhere in the shadows at the rear a man, rising, had produced a bottle and glasses. Gillinder, accepted apparently on a basis of fellowship, drank with them now, the unaccustomed contraband burning his throat like fire.

They talked for an hour. Gillinder, it appeared, could be of use to them and they to him, but when finally they separated to meet again at a time appointed for the next day but one, Gillinder, like a man in a dream, sought his hotel. The detective who shadowed him from the cabaret was at his heels the moment he left the tenement.

It was late, hard upon two o'clock, when, dismissing his taxi at the corner of the street, Gillinder stood a moment gulping in lungfuls of the crisp autumn air. And it was then that through the alcoholic haze in which he moved he saw the tall figure, motionless, beneath the corner arc.

He looked, then looked again, stifling a quick word in his throat.

For the face that looked into his, blazing eyes on a level with his own, was the face of the bank examiner, Cheevers!

CHAPTER FIVE

"FRISCO"

GILLINDER, restraining an impulse to cry out, to run, stood his ground, but even as he gazed the figure vanished.

For a moment he had thought that he had seen a ghost. Well, he must be careful; he must keep his feet down. Such visions, born of the potent poison that turned men to beasts, that waylay madness—aye, and worse. Cheevers was dead and he was safe, secure, and in a little while, a very little while, he would be quit of that dangerous outfit with whom murder was just a trade. He felt sure now that he merely imagined he had seen the bank examiner.

To throw himself in with the band of crooks had been furthest from the embezzler's thoughts. The Pinkertons had been busy on the bank robbery, of course, but they were following a cold trail. In the morning, with the information that he would give the detectives the yeggs would be gathered in, that twenty thousand would be his, Gillinder's, with none to say him nay. And as to the "confession" that he had made, even if the bandits witnessed to it, their testimony would not be believed. If necessary, he could say that it had been just a ruse.

No, there was not one single thing that could convict him; he felt that he was safe.

But as he passed through the lobby of the hotel he did not see the eyes watching him under lowered lids—the tall man dozing in the wing chair by the fire who, as Gillinder went upward in the elevator, rose with the lithe ease of an athlete, going over to the desk. It was the detective who had been trailing him.

The sleepy night clerk stared as the tall man, turning back his coat, presented his symbol of authority. Then their voices met and mingled in a blurring monotone of quick question and answer.

Above stairs the embezzler's rest was colored by fantastic dreams.

Gillinder awoke with a head that rang and a tongue that was furred. He had a feeling in the region just abaft the solar plexus that he was in trouble.

Leaden-eyed, pale-faced, he descended to the dining-room, his hands twitching like a man in a palsy, a tic at the corner of his mouth jerking with a slack violence.

His breakfast was a mockery, and somehow, as he toyed with the food, again he was seeing the face of Cheevers. It seemed to come between him and the sunlight, pale, accusatory, like a disembodied ghost rising out of the past to point a future for him that was, somehow, horrible. Rising heavily, he went out to the street. There was time enough for his visit to the Pinkerton office.

He had a full day before the time of the appointment with the bandits; meanwhile he would take a walk and see the sights, working off a dull ache that had begun to press like an iron band about his forehead.

In the doorway he nearly cannoned into a man whose face was vaguely familiar; there was something disquieting in the remembrance. The man's eyes had bored into his for a moment, agate-hard, in a brief, semi-sardonic, coldly contemptuous appraisal. Or so it seemed.

Gillinder did not know it, but it was the detective who had watched his uncertain progress across the lobby as he had come in the night previous. Now, as the embezzler passed to the curb, the other turned, following him at a little distance, his eyes speculative under lowered brows.

But Gillinder remained oblivious.

Perhaps, however, his careless confidence might have abated a trifle had he been aware of another man which had also followed his exit from the rooming-house in that turgid tenement near the Pink Parrot.

"Frisco," the bandit leader, had said to this man, "you keep cases on that bird! Get me? Everything's jake, sure, but—we gotta watch our step. You keep an eye on him, just to see he don't get in no trouble. I think he's 'right,' but—we ain't takin' chances!"

Frisco's answer had been the barest of nods, but he had kept his own counsel. For a gunman, a yegg, a stick-up, he was a silent, uncommunicative man. He had

thrown himself in with Scoppini and his mob, following their looting of the Sedalia National. He had proved himself on a couple of "touches." He was one of them; that was all that mattered.

But his face had worn an enigmatic look; the grim smile with which he had received his instructions from Big Mike might have meant anything or nothing.

Leaving the hang-out, his course had taken him past Gillinder's hotel, so that, as it chanced, he had been passing the entrance as the tall man with the detective badge who had spoken to the night clerk was coming out.

Now, at sight of this man Frisco's eyes had narrowed, his jaw muscles tightening with pressure as the other had come slowly down the steps. Then they had met, passed in the full glare of the entrance lights, but there had been no recognition in the tall man's eyes.

Frisco was passing on, when of a sudden the tall stranger had swung abruptly on his heel.

"Oh, excuse me!" he had remarked loudly. "Could I ask you for a match?"

The crook paused.

The street at that time had been empty, or nearly so.

In the near distance there was the leisurely approaching figure of a policeman idly swinging his club. One or two belated pedestrians were hurrying along the opposite curb. In the hotel doorway a party of three, somewhat obviously the worse for wear, were holding each other erect.

Frisco's glance swept these last men in a quick, flashing appraisal as, thumbing in his pocket, he had remarked casually with a little laugh:

"Umm! I've got—just *six*—we'll make it fifty-fifty!"

That had been all. The detective and the crook had separated then, going their diverse ways. But even if Harvey Gillinder, striding along the street in the pale fall sunshine, had seen them he would not have remarked the matter as being unusual. On an impulse he bent his steps in the direction of the Pinkerton office. After all, on second thought, it would be best not to delay. The mob—Scoppini and the five who called him leader—these were desperate and dangerous men, treacherous and remorseless; if he wanted to make certain of that reward it had best be now or never.

Reaching the office building, he went upward in the elevator to a corridor that was thick-piled with shadows; then, with his hand upon the knob of the office door, he turned.

Something—a shadow half seen and then withdrawn—had flickered for a moment at a turn of the long hall to his left. It was the crook who had been trailing him.

He wheeled, but there was no one there.

The door opened and closed shut behind him. Then, down the long hall from the shadows at the turn there appeared for a moment a face, head high, like a face without a body, lips drawn backward from the teeth in a soundless grimace.

It was Frisco.

CHAPTER SIX

THE OWL TAXI

GILLINDER, leaving the Pinkerton office, went downward in the elevator with a mind at ease. Everything had been arranged, even to the reward. He was to keep his appointment with the bandits for the following day, as he had agreed, but behind him, just long enough to avoid any possible miscarriage of the plan, would be the officers.

This, then, was the way it was to be carried out:

Gillinder, once inside, would suddenly discover that he was minus his cigarettes. He was to step out, presumably for a brief visit to a shop at the corner of the street, leaving the room door ajar. Then, once in the hall, he was to signal the officers by the dropping of a coin.

He would be safe enough. The operatives, coming in by the back way (there was a mews that came in just behind from the main street at an angle), would be invisible from the windows just above. After that it

would be a sudden rush and then the finish of Scoppini and the rest.

Gillinder, turning the plot over in his mind, was not conscious of any flaw; that coin, for instance, thrown from the stairhead to the street door just below, would sound its warning upon the entrance tiles; as a signal it would be efficient. The rest of the afternoon he put in at a picture show in which he was fatuously complacent as virtue triumphant over vice. Then, dining in state at a Broadway restaurant, on a sudden impulse he hailed a taxi:

"Chinatown," he told the driver, getting into the battered vehicle without a backward look.

Now if Gillinder had observed that driver on his seat, it would probably have made little difference, anyway. The lean, hard-bitten countenance was scarcely reassuring, but if he had seen it in the full glare of the light he would have remembered it as the crook he stopped from knifing Scoppini. Lost in pleasurable anticipation of that which was to come, after a little he became aware that the taxi was jolting and lurching over cobbles. Then, peering through the window, he saw all at once that he was in a street that was silent and grim, on either hand tall warehouses seen dimly to right and left.

The taxi slowed abruptly as Gillinder, rapping on the glass, rose in his seat.

"I say," he shouted, "where are you taking me?"

And then, as the door swung wide, the words were stifled in his throat. For, peering at him in the doorway, lips agrin, eyes fastened upon him with unspeakable suggestion, was the face of the man whom he had fought back there at the Pink Parrot—the man whom he had thwarted, cheated of his vengeance upon Scoppini of the iron hand.

Now the voice came in a hissing guttural:

"I been a-layin' f'r you. I followed you. Now I'm gonna croak you, as sure as Gawd made little apples. You saved Big Mike. Now, you'll get yours!"

Gillinder could only stare in a dumb terror as the long knife flashed up and out. It poised, darted, swooped, the long blade leveled at his heart.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SIGNAL

GILLINDER, cowering in his seat, felt in imagination the sharp steel searing through his vitals. Then, between two ticks of a watch, he heard a grating curse. There came an impact like the sound of a butcher's cleaver on the chopping block. The crook's face was blotted out, and in its stead he saw, all at once, the face of Frisco. Gillinder had only gotten rid of one crook to have another at his heels.

A moment Frisco peered into his eyes, grim, unsmiling; then, cool, matter-of-fact, Gillinder heard his voice:

"Well, I fixed that crook. Now, you stay where you are! I'm driving you to the hotel."

The door slammed and the gears meshed. Gillinder, white-faced, shaken, sat like a man turned to stone until, the taxi arriving at the hotel, he alighted stiffly, standing a moment at the curb.

"I'm certainly obliged," he was beginning; then, open-mouthed, he stared, his eyes goggling at the man seated at the wheel.

It was not Frisco, but a man whom he had never seen before.

Then, even as he gazed, the motor roared; the taxi, leaping forward at full speed, rolled onward and away.

Gillinder, confused and shaken, went upward in a daze to his room, to sleep heavily till late. Dressing in a fumbling haste, he spent the morning in the privacy of his room, his thoughts turning to the mysterious Frisco and the events of the past forty-eight hours. Lunching at the hotel, as the time drew near for his meeting with Scoppini and his mob he was aware of a curious foreboding. It was a distinct yet strangely illogical unease that, as the hours wore on toward evening, began to make itself felt in an increasing tension and brought him a dozen times from his chair

in a ceaseless trip from the bed to the window and back again to the door.

But at length when the hands of his watch were pointing to the hour of four, he put on his hat with a quick, nervous gesture, striding to the door.

Four-thirty was the time appointed, and it was exactly four-twenty-nine when, having ordered a taxi from the hotel stand, he dismissed it at the corner of the street in which was the tenement house and the hang-out of the mob.

But it was with leaden steps and slow that he went up the stairs, to pause in a sudden access of pure nervous apprehension even as his knuckles had sounded on the door.

It opened, and through the haze of tobacco smoke Gillinder could see that the crooks were all on hand—all but Frisco.

Scoppini welcomed him.

"Well, we're all here," he said in his husky, asthmatic guttural. "All but Frisco, an' I'd like to know what's keeping *him*."

The embezzler, moistening his lips, thrust a finger in the pocket of his coat.

"Lord!" he remarked disgustedly. "Forgot my cigarettes!" He named a brand which it was certain that none of them would have, because, as it happened, there was none such. "I can't smoke any other," he continued. "Well, just a moment; I'll be right back."

He rose, turning toward the door, when, out of the tail of his eye, he became suddenly aware that Hinch, Scoppini's lieutenant, had arisen with a quick, cat-like movement from his chair. In one stride he was between the embezzler and the door.

"Easy does it, old-timer!" he purred silkily. "You figurin' t' fade—ha? Cold feet; is that the answer? Well, you're set!"

His voice, loud in the sudden stillness, came to Gillinder with an abrupt, savage menace. And for a moment a tension seemed to rise and grow there in that narrow room, and then it was broken by Scoppini.

"Gee, Hinch," he growled, "Mr. Gillinder is all right—he's *'right,'* ain't he? Lay off him, I tell you! Now, forget it!"

Gillinder grinned nervously as Hinch moved slowly from the door.

"I'll be with you in a brace of shakes," he told them, but, do what he would, his voice cracked suddenly in the middle register, so that it came stiffly with a sort of squeak.

Passing through the doorway, he turned, his fingers fumbling for the coin. It fell, ringing upon the stair treads as Gillinder, stiff-legged, followed it.

And then, as a mine is exploded beneath a summer sea, everything seemed to happen at once.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NEMESIS

THERE came a rush of feet on the stairway. The doorway just below vomited a compact wedge of men who, guns out, boiled upward past Gillinder with a charging rush. Above him, as he leaned weakly against the door casing, there came a single shot, another, then a quick, rolling rattle. And then as he waited, quaking, in the doorway, three men, stern-faced, confronted him as if materialized out of the air.

Gillinder saw a tall man whom he did not recognize; it was the operative who had interrogated the hotel clerk. Behind him was Frisco, and behind—a face at which the embezzler fell backward with a muffled shout.

It was Cheevers.

The detective spoke, jerking a thumb upward as the officers, herding their sullen prisoners ahead, moved slowly down the stair. It had been a brief and desperate battle, mute evidence of which appeared now in the limp figures carried downward at the rear. Hinch was dead; Big Mike Scoppini had passed in the full measure of his sins; nor had the officers been scathless.

"Good work!" exclaimed the tall operative, whose coat sleeve had been torn in two places during the fight. "Thanks to Mr. Gillinder here—and you, sergeant!"

He indicated Frisco where he stood, in-

cluding Cheevers with a wave of the hand. "Frisco" kept silent, but the detective grinned.

"You didn't know it, Gillinder, but we watched over you like—brothers," he continued. "Myself and Police Sergeant 'Frisco'; didn't we, sergeant? But—well, it was hardly necessary at that, although we were mighty careful I'll say, even to the sergeant's match code, which told me that there were *six* crooks in this gang."

"Including Mister Harvey Gillinder!" he grated. "You gave yourself away right enough, Gillinder, but Mr. Cheevers here was not as dead as you thought he was. I'll admit we thought you might have guessed it—that time you saw him on the street. It was our one slip, but we watched you pretty closely after that. Well, just before the fire, Gillinder, your books were jammed into the safe by Mr. Cheevers here; he was only stunned as it happened, and the safe was a fire-proof one, as you know, of course."

His tone became abruptly cold, authoritative.

"Harvey Gillinder, I want you for embezzlement, and anything you say will be used against you. But I guess you've attended to that," he finished with a frosty smile. "And as to the reward, you'll get all that's coming to you, and you can *bank* on that!"

His hand fell like the weight of doom upon Gillinder's shoulder and turned him to the right-about as the embezzler stiffened up.

"Now—march!"

Head sunk between his shoulders, the embezzler, eyes straight before him in a stony calm, moved stiffly to obey.

SAFEGUARDING UNITED STATES BANK-NOTES

ONE of the great considerations in the manufacture of banknotes in the United States Bureau of Printing and Engraving is to guard effectively against the possibility of counterfeiting or theft.

The paper is made in a private paper plant, which manufactures for none but the Government. It is made of cotton and linen rags, in which are mixed the silk threads that may be easily seen by holding a banknote or a Treasury note to the light.

The printing and engraving process through which the paper is put is a very elaborate one and requires very complex machinery. The machinery used is so accurate and so well fortified against successful imitation as to render both the means and the product practically beyond undetectable imitation.

The ink used is made in the same building where the work is done. One large room of the bureau contains something like a dozen large paint mills, which are kept busy grinding together the colors and the oil used on the presses. Only the best materials are used in the manufacture of this ink for bank-notes and postage-stamps.

The sheets on which currency is to be printed are counted when received. They are issued to the workmen on an order issued by the superintendent and are charged to that workman on a passbook provided for the purpose. When the printing is done the printer makes the impression up in books of one hundred each, with brown paper placed between them. These are delivered to a clerk and the workman is credited with their delivery on his passbook. Some sheets may be spoiled, but all are credited to him so that his book may balance.

These impressions are counted and inspected. Spoiled ones are destroyed by properly authorized persons. The perfect ones are dried, pressed and again inspected and counted. They are then cut and delivered for issue.

Tricked and Trapped

By J. B. WARRENTON

CHAPTER ONE

THE midnight air was pierced by the sinister bark of a revolver! State Trooper Blake was positive now that he was not mistaken. It was still and sultry, and the sound was somewhat muffled—more like a tire blow-out. Blake reined in his mount and listened intently. Then came the second shot. That settled it; he knew that some one was pulling the trigger of a gun. It was no trick of the elements. Something was wrong.

Dismounting, he dropped the reins over his horse's head and started in the direction whence the shots came. His firm-set jaw and steely eyes were outward symbols of set determination. He had probed many of the byways of crime, and to confront the unexpected thrilled him with the excitement of battle. Those sudden shots reverberating on the tranquil night did not alarm him. They carried the fact to his mind that he was an officer and that his duty was to find out who fired the shots.

The houses that were scattered over his territory were few and far between. A more remote place would be hard to find. More than twenty miles from Boston, as the crow flies, farms and abandoned summer residences were scattered about. There was one old mansion that, despite its neglect, loomed up proudly amidst the débris and rank growth which surrounded it—a house where in former days stately dames in hoopskirts and powdered wigs tripped the minuet with swains in silken breeches and buckled shoes.

But those days were now but a memory—dead; all the grandeur dead, too, as dead as its Tory owner.

The present owner and occupant was a money lender, whose place of business was in the city. His name was Simon Golding. He lived alone there in the summer. During the winter months his dingy office served as a living room. Simon kept no servants and he paid an income tax to the government that sometimes ran up into four figures.

Now, Simon's dealings were with a select few. His patrons were from beyond the "dead line," commonly designated the underworld. Police headquarters' long arm had been unable to date to encircle Simon's spare form and gather him into its mesh. There he lived alone, unloved, unknown and ostracized by the inhabitants of his little world.

Trooper Blake now stood before a tumble-down wall that once embellished the front of the vast estate. Again he listened intently. Crickets, frogs and other nocturnal soloists of the country were the only sounds that were audible. No other. The rusty iron gate next received his attention. It was locked on the inside. He shook it, but concluded it was impregnable. A low whistle brought his mount trotting slowly to his side.

"I'm going over that wall, Dandy, so you'll have to be my ladder," he whispered to the handsome bay as it rubbed its sleek nose against the trooper's shoulder. In an instant he was on the saddle, then on the wall.

Dropping down lightly on the inside, he found himself amidst a jungle of creepers, brush and rubbish—the accumulation of years. Gingerly he plowed his way to the entrance of the house. There was no sound. Turning the big brass knob which still

adorned the massive oak door, Blake pressed inward. It was unlocked! Tense and alert he waited, then stepped inside. In one hand he held his service revolver, in the other a flashlight which oscillated its streaming ray around the somber interior. Silence. Then he advanced softly to the foot of a stairway that led to the upper part of the house.

He was in a large hall, from which several doors opened into rooms beyond, and seeping from under one of those doors was a dim yellow light.

To that door Trooper Blake glided. Under pressure of his hand this knob turned and the door yielded. He sprang inside and stared.

"Up! Lively!" Blake snapped out. "That's right. Now step under the light so that I can see you better."

The handcuffs clicked, for the trooper had a prisoner.

"Now, mister man, suppose you do a little talking," said Blake, after he had frisked the man for weapons and found none. "Who was doing the shooting in here and who was shot? Who are you? Where's Golding?"

The prisoner, a rat-eye, pallid youth, cocked his head to one side and sneered.

"You're a wise bird, I don't think. I'm makin' a business call on Simon, an' he ain't at home. Whatcha gonna do 'bout it—eh?"

Trooper Blake began sniffing the air.

"You're a liar!" he said quietly. "Some one has been burning powder in this room within the last ten minutes. You'd better talk or later on you will—and talk like blazes. Come through."

"Forget it," snarled the prisoner. "I been waitin' here all night fer Simon, an' he didn't show up. Dat's all."

Seeing that the man did not intend to criminate himself, the officer led him out of the house.

When Blake had his prisoner safely locked up in the village jail under guard, he lost no time in getting in touch with his superior. He told his story, listened to orders, then rode back to the house.

CHAPTER TWO

"WHERE'S Mooney?" barked Chief Mullaly as he hung up the telephone receiver after a lengthy talk over the wire. "If he's in send him to me."

Detective Tom Mooney was in and soon was standing at attention before the chief.

"I'm gonna send you to Brookside, Tom, so lend me your ear till I spill what it's all about."

Mooney smiled. The strategist sleuth of headquarters always smiled. Crooks said his smile was dangerous. Friends said it was a gift.

"I'm on, sir; thanks for the little outing."

Mullaly chewed on a mutilated cigar he had been smoking, made a wry face, then spat on the floor.

"I can't promise you any outing, Tom, but go and see for yourself."

The detective nodded and lowered himself into a chair beside Mullaly's desk. He heard the story about the two shots, of the unknown man arrested by Trooper Blake, the mysterious disappearance of the money lender and of Golding's safe having been cleaned out. But nothing incriminating had been found on the prisoner.

"He's not at his office, and hasn't been there since five o'clock last evening. He went to Brookside all right, 'cause Dane, the ticket puncher on the train, collected his ticket. And the bird they're holding," went on the chief, "answers the description of Slippery Cullen. Go ahead down and see what you can find out. The darn old 'fence' was no good, but murder is murder, and that's all that counts. S' long."

With a snarling of brakes and the whistling of air the train carrying the headquarters man pulled into Brookside an hour later. Trooper Blake met him on the platform, shook his hand warmly, then led him to the village lockup.

"Hello, Slippery," greeted Mooney, as soon as he was led into the prisoner's cell.

He was confronting the sullen, twitching figure within the barred enclosure. "What did you do with Golding?"

"Find out," the prisoner growled. "That's your business."

"All right, Cullen," grinned the detective, "I'll do that all right, but where did you plant the loot?"

"Don't make me laugh, Mooney; you've got nothin' on me this time."

A visit to Golding's house was of little gain for the Boston sleuth. The safe was empty. There was no disorder about it to indicate that it had been robbed. Except for its slovenly aspect the room or, in fact, every part of the spacious house which they searched thoroughly revealed no traces of having been ransacked. There were no traces of the money lender, either. His bed bore evidence of having been slept in, but nothing could be gained from that. Acting as his own housekeeper as he did, it was possible that the bed had not been made up for weeks.

All day and long into the night the detective quest continued. Walls were tapped for secret panels, floors examined for trapdoors, but all without result. The numerous acres of the vast estate were combed and beaten. Not even a slight clue came to light. Trooper Blake had been certain that he smelled powder smoke when he entered the room where he found Slippery, although no gun was found on the crook nor anywhere about the place.

Detective Mooney was not disheartened by any means.

The following day Slippery was taken before the local justice of Brookside for a hearing. Defiant, dogmatical and leering, he stuck to the story of his call on Golding for business reasons. Not finding the money lender at home, Slippery was waiting for him when the trooper came upon him. He fired no shots and did not hear any. Just business, business, that was what he was there for.

Much against the wishes of the Boston sleuth, the prisoner was held as a suspicious person. Next day Mooney returned to the village armed with a habeas corpus, based on a breach of parole warrant. He and Slippery walked up the steps at headquarters some two hours later.

"Are you ready to talk, Cullen?" blustered Chief Mullaly, shaking his ponderous fist under the prisoner's nose. "Let's have it! Out with it! Where's Golding's body? Where is it? You killed him, didn't you? Say yes! Blast you, talk!"

Slippery's ratty eyes were gleaming. His yellow fangs were bared to the gums. He clutched the arms of the chair as his puny body leaned forward.

"Aw, forget it," he snarled. "Yo' ain't got nothin' on me. Go to it, an' get it over. I'm sleepy. I was there on business, I tol' you,' so lemme alone."

"But we found the body, Slippery," put in Mooney.

The suspect looked up at him with disgust, which was slowly supplanted by a leer.

"Mooney, you give me a pain. You, th' star dick o' th' department, tryin' t' put that ol' stuff over on *me!* But that's your business, I suppose."

"Rock him!" roared the chief, after this sally from Cullen.

Then began the pitiful human tragedy colloquially designated as "the third degree." One hour—two hours it went on. The figure in the chair was now half lifeless. His thin face was ghastly. Over it trickled streams of perspiration.

"Ready to talk?" hissed Mullaly, nodding to the detective, who stopped the rocking of the chair.

Slippery lolled his head drunkenly from side to side.

"No," he gasped brokenly. "Nothin'—on—me. Business—water——"

What the chief said is unprintable. What the detective said was this:

"I think he's telling the truth, chief, and——"

"You think *what?"* thundered Mullaly, springing erect. "What——"

"I think the only thing we can hold him on is for not reporting as ordered by the parole board," finished Mooney, never batting an eyelid and looking straight into those of the chief's.

"Umph!" growled Mullaly.

CHAPTER THREE

SEVERAL months later Slippery Cullen, no longer a prisoner, was back to his old haunts again. The sudden obliteration of the money lender was talked of no more. Headquarters plain-clothes sleuths paid no more attention to Slippery than they did to any other habitué of the underworld. That pleased Slippery, who seemed in high spirits. He swaggered around Kelly's near-beer saloon, winked his eye knowingly and smiled.

"Slip me a couple more saw-bucks, Kell?" he asked of the saloon owner.

"What do yo' think I am, a Rockefeller?" grated that worthy. "Get out an' grab off a bunch o' smackers, and don't be shapin' 'round here like yo' wus a real guy! Yo' are only a cheap dip."

"Aw, forgit it, Kell; I know my business. I'll be all jake pretty soon. Oh, boy, you'll see me step out!"

"Then *step* outa here," growled Kelly, walking away.

A few nights later Slippery Cullen unlimbered himself from the rods beneath a freight car at Brookside. This means of transportation was not at all to his liking, but a necessity. Neither was it for lack of funds, but for business reasons. He was somewhat bedraggled-looking from his "lower berth" journey, but his spirits were not in the least dampened.

Pulling his cap down over his eyes, he hurried from the track and headed up the dark road. Spring thaws and country roads churn up a bogy mixture when traveled. Slippery cursed as he floundered through the sticky mess and wondered why all streets were not paved for folks to walk on who were there on business.

Fifteen minutes of this strenuous trekking brought him before the rusty iron gate of the old Tory's estate. With the aid of his nimble hands and feet he soon stood on the inner side. He shuddered slightly, but not from the cold. Bracing his narrow shoulders and shutting his teeth firmly, he plowed through the rank mass of weeds and rubbish until he stood before the door of the house.

This he found secured with a strong padlock. The windows were also boarded up. Locked doors and barricaded windows had never kept Slippery out, especially if he feared no opposition. A fine steel jimmy was then brought into play. A few passing seconds of dexterous work and he again stood in the inky darkness of the somber house just as the clock in the tower of the little church on the hill tolled mournfully the witching hour of midnight.

Again a shudder ran over Slippery's frail body. His hand shook as if it were smitten with palsy. Scurrying rats and the low, weird moaning of the wind as it seeped through many fissures in the ancient house added fuel to his rapidly culminating terror. He almost screamed aloud when a bewildered bat crashed around the hall in its blind progress.

"Gawd!" he muttered hoarsely. Then with shaking hand he brought forth a liquor bottle from a pocket in his coat, drew the stopple, then drank long and deep.

The fiery liquor had a stimulating effect on Slippery, who, with his flashlight ray blazing a trail before him, walked boldly into the room from which he had been taken a prisoner by Trooper Blake several months before. It was now shortly after midnight.

Straight to the fireplace he walked and flashed his light slowly over the smoke-grimed tiles which framed it. On a red tile beneath the mantelpiece the gleam faltered, then stopped. Slippery's deft fingers played around the smooth enameled surface for an instant, then the tile swung outward as though on an axis.

"Ah!" he breathed, plunging his hand into the aperture. When he withdrew it he held a small tin box. On his knees on the floor, his flashlight glowing beside him, again the fine-tempered steel jimmy served its purpose. In an instant the cover flew open and the contents were revealed.

"Thunder!" growled Slippery, fingering the few pieces of jewelry the box contained, along with a small roll of banknotes and a few seemingly unimportant papers. "Guess I'm stung on this job. That ol' yap had that roll somewhere 'bout this shack, but where?" he thought, fright again grip-

ping his vitals. "Supposin' this is all he's got here after——"

"Are you there, Slippery Cullen?" came a sepulchral voice from the gloom.

The rest of his assumption trailed away in a gurgle. He sprang to his feet with a cry, the box and its contents rattling to the floor, its echo penetrating every nook and crevice in the house. Eyes dilated, mouth agape, he backed to the door. All the while his rigid fingers were clawing for his automatic. At the door he halted, gun in one hand, fumbling for the knob with the other. Then the voice spoke again. "Simon Golding's voice!" mumbled the frightened prowler.

"I repeat," said the voice in a dreary monotone, "are you there, Slippery Cullen? Answer, for I cannot harm you if I would."

Again the contents of the whisky bottle put a proverbial "Dutch courage" into the craven crook.

"Wassamarrer, Simon," he whined. "Whatcha want?"

There was silence for a second, except the winds moaning outside. Again the voice struck terror to the crook's soul.

"Cullen," it droned, "when you took my life I was not ready to die. I have gone to neither salvation nor damnation. I also have a debt to pay, and you must act as my sponsor. Are you still there, Slippery?"

"Yeah," whispered Slippery, who, despite his fright, was glowing with interest. Ethereal spirits were something new to him, and the liquid spirits were now in the ascendant. Thus his courage was renewed.

"Then hear me out," said the voice. "Twenty years ago I wronged a trusting person who has long been dead, but she left a child—a girl. She is now living in dire poverty, and through her I am going to right the wrong I did to her parent. I bear you no ill will, Cullen, as I had only a short time to live at the most. Why did you do it? Why?"

Slippery gulped a few times before he could frame a reply. What did it all mean? Was the bootleg shine he had been imbibing affecting his mental faculties? Or was it merely an illusion incited by a guilty conscience? Call it what you may, the crook was unable to break off the uncanny parlance and flee, so he mumbled:

"I didn't mean t' croak y', Simon; honest I didn't! I was broke and desperate, an' thought yo' had th' big roll yo' took outa th' bank. Don't hold it 'gainst me, Simon; tell me whatcha want so's I can beat it."

"Very good, Slippery Cullen," the voice said again; "that will help me more than you think. Now, do as I bid, and you will get your just deserts."

Silence again reigned. Breathlessly Slippery waited. Once he thought he heard the whinny of a horse. He clutched his revolver tightly and crouched low. Then the voice went on:

"Go to where you hid my body and you'll find sewed up in the lining of my pants a sealed envelope. Inside is a will, also the money which I drew from the bank—ten thousand dollars in large bills. Give the girl half, and the other half is yours. You will find her address on a card. Work fast, Cullen, and don't fail me. If you do I will never be at rest. Ten thousand dollars. Ten thousand dollars. Ten——"

Then the voice trailed off into nothingness.

CHAPTER FOUR

SLIPPERY waited for several moments before he moved. Ten thousand dollars had an animating effect on him. He surely was playing in luck this time.

"Give the skirt a split," he thought. "Fat chance." All or none was Slippery's creed. Greed was his curse. He moved.

This time his steps piloted him to a closet under the main stairs. Opening the door gingerly, he entered. Another drink—the last of it—spurred him to his mission. Down on his knees he ran his nimble fingers over the molding of the mopboard. Then he stopped and centred his flashlight on the place. Slowly a portion of the floor was raised, revealing a cavernous depth.

At first Slippery recoiled with horror. Then, prompted by greed and propped by whisky, he set about his gruesome task.

Feverishly he tore at the sodden clothes of his victim.

At last with an oath he sprang erect. His face was ashy and sweat was oozing from every pore in his frail body. He coughed and spat, then glared down at the loathsome thing his flashlight was focused on. It was Golding's body.

"'Tain't there, Simon!" he cried in frenzy. "Where is it? Tell me! That ain't a square deal! I'll——"

"You'll go with me," said a voice behind him. Not Simon Golding's voice, but the voice of his nemesis. It was a voice he had cause to know very well—Detective Tom Mooney's.

"A plant!" snarled Slippery as he whirled, his blue-nosed automatic scorching the smooth bore as it spewed its deadly pellet.

Simultaneously with the roar of Slippery's gun a body behind the detective catapulted towards him, while the man's long right arm drove his doubled-up fist plumb into the crook's midriff. The blow had been struck none too soon, for the bullet seared Mooney's face and buried itself in the wall behind him.

Again the handcuffs clicked. Again Trooper Blake had a prisoner.

"Thanks for leading us to where the body was hidden," grinned Detective Mooney a short time later in the village jail. "I thought your greed would be your undoing. I was pretty near sure that you killed Golding, but where you hid his body was another thing. I put Kelly on the grill, and he told me how you and him were listening to Slugger Ryan and Tod Flannery when they were discussing the Loyd robbery and the price old Golding was going to pay them for the loot."

"Simon was to meet them at his house that night," went on the "Hub" sleuth, "but Johnson and Sweeney were watching them so close that they were afraid to risk it. Golding changed his mind, too, for he returned the money that he drew out of the bank in the morning, just before he took his train for home. You've been snooping around there for the past week. Don't deny that."

The crook was mute.

"You held up old Simon that night for the ten thousand which he drew and put back in the bank. That was what he was going to pay for the Loyd haul. He laughed at you, and you shot him. You saw him remove the tin box from the safe and put it behind the tile. You also, in your spying, must have seen him work the trap in the closet."

"It's a lie!" shouted Slippery; "a damn lie! I didn't——"

"Oh, yes, you did," smiled Mooney. "You told Simon's ghost you did. And, besides, Slugger Ryan told us——"

"The snitcher! I'll——"

The laugh that followed silenced Slippery. He glared at Mooney and Trooper Blake. Then his eyes wandered to the third party. He stared and groaned: "Simon Golding's ghost."

"Yes, Slippery; that's what," said the "ghost." "As clerk for Mr. Golding for the past five years I learned to mimic his voice. Pretty good; think so?"

"Damn smart," growled Slippery.

Mrs. Blanchard's Emeralds

By FREDERIC W. JOHNSTON

CHAPTER ONE

THE house was only of moderate size, but it stood in the midst of beautifully kept grounds and was marked by a certain quietly sumptuous air, as if the people who lived there were in the habit of having about everything they wanted.

"Just the place for a jewel robbery," Detective MacNider thought as he pressed a pudgy forefinger against the bell. Then he took off his hat, revealing a head of hair that was as vividly red as his eyes were vividly blue, and began mopping his face with his handkerchief after the immemorial custom of fat men. The hat had only just been returned to his head and the handkerchief to his pocket when the door was opened by a tight-lipped maid with an oatmeal complexion and sullen gray eyes, who took his card and showed him into a handsomely furnished living-room.

"Please tell Mr. Blanchard that Mr. Gray sent me," the detective said as she turned to go. Then to himself: "Looks as if her victuals didn't agree with her."

His eyes traveled about the room, taking it all in. "Nice," he reflected, "and rather homey, too. But awfully expensive. I'll bet this rug cost a thousand dollars."

Presently the sound of steps made him turn as three persons entered the room. The first was evidently Mr. Blanchard himself, a narrow-chested, worried-looking man of sixty, having yellowish-gray eyes and wearing a light overcoat, though it was eleven o'clock of a sunny morning in June. Behind him came his wife—MacNider noted the wedding-ring on her finger—small, fair, twenty-five and unbelievably pretty, with eyes the color of sun-lit amber and a mouth that drooped a little at the corners.

"I'll bet she spends half her time feeling sorry for herself," was the detective's inward comment.

The last of the trio proved to be a Miss Carle, Mrs. Blanchard's sister, who was in appearance as like the latter as one tea-rose is like another, except that her mouth had a slight humorous twist as if she found the world rather an amusing place to live in.

"I'd like to marry you," thought MacNider, falling suddenly in love for the fiftieth time in the twenty-eight years of his existence. And there arose before his eyes a delectable vision of a breakfast table set for two, with Miss Carle pouring the coffee.

"Won't you sit down?" Mr. Blanchard asked when the introductions were over. "No, no, not there. Take this one." He pointed to the largest and strongest chair in the room, and stood anxiously by while MacNider lowered his ponderous form into it. Then he went across the room and looked at a thermometer hanging on the wall. "Seventy-one," he sighed and gloomily closed the open window before sitting down.

"And now," he said, fixing the detective with his yellowish eyes, "to business. Did Mr. Gray think fit to—er—mention to you what I told him over the wire this morning?"

"Yes. He said your wife had had an emerald necklace stolen, and she wanted it back."

"Precisely; a necklace valued at twelve thousand dollars. And I need not remind you, Mr. MacNider, that twelve thousand

dollars is a great deal of money. But before going any further it might be as well to state that I was not here at the time of the robbery. A small matter of—er—business took me over to Belmont yesterday afternoon, and I didn't get back till this morning. I had to eat a country hotel supper and a country hotel breakfast and sleep in a country hotel bed," he told the detective. Then, after pausing for a moment to brood over the hardships that he had thus been called upon to endure, he turned to his wife. "Perhaps you might begin, Elaine, by telling Mr. MacNider just what happened."

But for the moment Mrs. Blanchard was thinking of something else.

"Portia," she said, rising, "would you mind changing seats with me? This chair's awfully uncomfortable. Thanks," she added as the exchange was made. "And now that you're up, I wish you'd pull down that shade. The light strikes right in my eyes."

When the shade had been lowered the desired number of inches, and Miss Carle had sat down in the uncomfortable chair, her ladyship was ready to proceed.

"There really isn't very much to tell," she began. "I took dinner last night with the Quimbys, over on the other side of town, and got back about eleven. My sister was in bed with a sick headache, and I had told my maid not to wait up for me, so there was no one about. But this, of course, didn't bother me any. I simply let myself in, and went upstairs and undressed, and then came down to the dining-room for a glass of water, leaving the emeralds lying on my dressing-table. When I got back I was just in time to see a man's head and shoulders disappearing down the trellis below one of my windows, and the necklace was gone."

The detective took out his note-book and opened it. "At about what time was this?" he asked.

"About half-past eleven."

"Do you think you'd recognize the man if you saw him again?"

"No, I'm afraid not. He wore a mask, so I couldn't see his face. The only thing I noticed was that he had big, hairy hands and very broad shoulders."

"'Big, hairy hands,'" the detective repeated as he wrote the words down, "'and very broad shoulders.' Did you cry out?"

"No, I was too frightened to make a sound. All I could do was to stand staring at the windows till I heard him reach the ground. Then I saw him run across the lawn and disappear among the trees out by the front gate."

The officer nodded thoughtfully, as if he were carefully pondering what she had told him. As a matter of fact, however, he was merely thinking what a pretty foot Miss Carle had.

"Then what did you do?" he asked.

"I didn't do anything. With no one on the place but women, there was nothing I could do except go to bed and wait till morning."

The detective looked surprised. "Haven't you any men-servants?" he asked.

"Yes, but the gardener is only here in the daytime, and Pierre, the chauffeur, was arrested yesterday afternoon for talking back to a policeman, and didn't get out till this morning."

"Then how did you get to the Quimbys?"

"I took a taxi."

"And did you come home in a taxi?"

For the barest fraction of a second she hesitated. "N-no. One of the guests, a Mr. Van Tyne, brought me home in his car."

During the preceding dialogue Mr. Blanchard's eyes had been wandering vaguely in the direction of the thermometer, but at this they suddenly returned.

"My dear," he exclaimed, "there surely must have been some one there besides Philip Van Tyne that you could have come home with."

"Now, Elmer," she pleaded, "please don't be so old-fashioned. I'm still all here, you see. Phil didn't eat me."

But this didn't satisfy her husband. He didn't like Mr. Van Tyne, and said so in a way that left no doubt as to the strength of his feelings. During the rather heated discussion that followed MacNider found time to note that Miss Carle's eyelashes were

just a trifle longer than her sister's. When it was over and peace had been restored, he took up his note-book and began again.

"Why didn't you send for the police?" was his next question.

Mrs. Blanchard almost laughed.

"You wouldn't ask that," she told him, "if you knew anything about the Haverford police. They're absolutely useless. When the County Bank was robbed last fall all they did was to stand around and ask questions. And it was the same way when Mrs. Quimby's pearls were stolen. You can't imagine how stupid they are."

MacNider nodded, as if to intimate that he knew just how she felt on this subject. Then he went on.

"As I understand it, your room is in the front of the house."

"Yes. My husband and I have to have front rooms, so as to be away from the noise from the kitchen. My sister's room is just back of mine. She doesn't mind noises."

Apparently there was something in this that appealed to Miss Carle's sense of humor, for she bit her lips and smiled. MacNider noted the smile, and then, turning to Mr. Blanchard, caught his eyes just as it was starting on its third trip to the thermometer.

"Were the jewels insured?" he asked.

"No," said the old gentleman sadly, "I am sorry to say they weren't. My wife has a small, burglar-proof safe in her room, and it seemed to me that with that to—er—rely on insurance would be an unnecessary expense."

The detective rose.

"And now, if you don't mind," he said, "I'd like to take a look at Mrs. Blanchard's room."

"I'll show it to you," she offered, rising in her turn. "And, Portia, I think you'd better come, too; I may need you. Elmer can stay here."

This arrangement being apparently satisfactory to all, they left Mr. Blanchard consulting his beloved thermometer and went upstairs.

Mrs. Blanchard's room proved to be a very daintily furnished apartment done in delicate pastel shades of pearl-gray and rose. MacNider managed to take his mind off Miss Carle long enough to give it a thorough examination, running his eye and his magnifying-glass over everything it contained, and paying especial attention to the silver toilet articles on the dressing-table, among which was a pair of very dull manicure scissors. But though he exerted himself to the utmost, all he could find during twenty minutes of hard and perspiring labor were a few fingerprints, and as these were entirely of the feminine variety, they didn't help him much. Then Mrs. Blanchard showed him the window through which the thief had come and gone, and inch by inch he went over that, too, with the same disappointing result.

"I suppose the burglar did that," he said, indicating a long slit in the screen not far from the edge.

"Yes," she replied. "He had to in order to reach in and pull back the catch. See, like this."

As she spoke she opened the screen and pushed it back on its hinges, thus giving MacNider a chance, which he promptly took advantage of, to lean out of the window and look down at the trellis and flower-bed below.

"Oho," he said to himself presently, "foot-prints." Then he gave a little gasp of surprise. "Square toes, narrow toes, where have I seen you before?" When he drew his head back into the room his face was as expressionless as an apple dumpling.

"So much for that," he said, trying to keep his eyes off Miss Carle and not succeeding for a minute. "And now, if you ladies will excuse me, I think I'll go down and take a look outside." With this and with a bow on which he rather prided himself, having often practiced it in private, he passed gracefully out of the room.

Once in the hall, however, with the door closed carefully behind him, he seemed in no particular hurry to go downstairs. Instead he stood for a moment listening, and then, deciding to risk it, tiptoed softly across to the opposite door, opened it and went in. The room, as he had supposed, was Mr. Blanchard's. A comforter and

two hot-water bottles lay on a chair by the bed, a thermometer over the mantel and there was a row of old-fashioned shoes along the wall. The detective pounced on these like a terrier after a rat, and began running them over in search of a pair with dried earth on the soles. When these had been found, as he had been perfectly certain they would be, he hid them under his coat, and, springing up, got back into the hall just in time to escape being caught by the tight-lipped maid who was at that moment coming up the stairs. MacNider gave her a friendly nod and smile in passing, and received in return a scornful glare that took all the conceit out of him. His cheerfulness, however, soon returned when he reached the flower-bed below Mrs. Blanchard's window and discovered that the shoes he carried fitted the footprints exactly.

Without stopping to consider what this might mean, he next examined the trellis, wondering as he did so why they had had it made so strong; he then went carefully over the lawn looking for more footprints and not finding any. It now occurred to him, as he stood hat in hand, mopping his face with his handkerchief, that before going any further it would be a good idea to get rid of the stolen shoes. And when this had been done, by the simple process of hiding them under an old-fashioned hat-rack that stood in the hall, he again left the house and started off downtown.

Looking at it one way," he said to himself as he walked along the shaded street, "Blanchard did it. Looking at it another, he didn't. Those footprints are his, of course; I'd stake my job on that. But if he was the man his wife saw on the trellis, how did she get that notion that he had big, hairy hands and broad shoulders? Blanchard's shoulders aren't broad, and he's got hands like an old woman. Anyhow, it doesn't sound like him. If it had been a pair of fur-lined comfy slippers that had been stolen, or a solid gold thermometer, I'd have suspected him from the start. But somehow I can't see him stealing those emeralds. Still you never can tell."

This question being temporarily disposed of, his mind turned to thoughts of a more tender nature.

"What a pretty name Portia is," he reflected. "And it just suits Miss Carle, too. I wonder what it rhymes with." He ran down the alphabet, came to "nausea" and gave it up in disgust. "Gee, what a language," he exclaimed. "I'll bet poets have an awful time."

CHAPTER TWO

HE took lunch at the first restaurant he came to, and afterwards asked his way to the *Morning Press* office, which proved to be a small building tucked away on a quiet side street, with no one in sight but a dapper youth dressed in the neat, ready-made clothes of a small-town dandy. The detective went up to him and smiled.

"On the paper?" he asked.

"Uh-huh," said the other, taking in MacNider's carefully tailored figure with an appreciative eye. "You're from New York, aren't you?"

"You guessed it. I used to be on the *Tribune*," MacNider told him, without thinking it necessary to add that his connection with the great Republican organ had lasted exactly twenty-four hours. "I'm not on any paper now, though," he went on. "I've got a job looking people up. Rich people. You know."

"Yes, I know." By this time the newspaper man had got a good general idea of MacNider's costume taken as a whole, and was starting in on a more detailed study, beginning with his necktie.

"Just at present," the detective continued, "I'm looking up a fellow-townsman of yours named Blanchard. You know all about him of course. How does he stand? Can he pay for anything he buys, do you think?"

"Oh, yes, Elmer's got all kinds of money," said the other, whose mind was now intent on the pattern of MacNider's shirt. "His old man left him over a million dollars when he died. He lives out on Oak

Boulevard, and his wife's got some of the finest jewels in Haverford."

"Oh, is he married?" MacNider seemed surprised. "What is his wife like?"

"She's a perfect little quince if you want my opinion." The clothes enthusiast had been counting the buttons on MacNider's vest, but he now raised his eyes to give the latter a look of deep meaning. "And I'm not the only person who thinks so, either."

"Oh, so there are others, are there?" The detective sensed that something was coming.

"Uh-huh. One other, anyhow, a fellow name Philip Van Tyne. Phil's the best-dressed man in town, lives at the Albemarle, gets all the red liquor he wants, nobody knows where, plays a great game of stud." He spoke as a man speaks who is describing his ideal. "Up to yesterday I hadn't the slightest idea there was anything going on in that direction. If you'd asked me I'd have said he was just barely acquainted with her. But something I saw last night put me wise to the fact that they know each other a good deal better than people think they do. About half-past eleven I happened to be standing out in front of the Alhambra—that's a place down the street where you can get a private dining-room any time, day or night—when along comes a car, and who should get out but Phil and Mrs. Blanchard. She wore a veil, of course—they mostly do, I notice, when they visit places like that—but just as she was going in it slipped down for a moment, and I got a good look at her face. Gee, you could have knocked me down with a feather."

"I suppose she saw you."

"No, that was the queer part of it; she didn't. The only light there was what came from the doorway, and I was standing where it didn't strike me, so she must have thought there was nobody around." The reporter stopped long enough to take a good look at MacNider's shoes, and then added: "Of course this is all on the q. t., you understand. It isn't the sort of story a man'd want to have get around. I'm only telling you because you're in the business."

The detective nodded.

"I understand," he said. Then, seeing that there was nothing more to be learned from this source, he told the reporter that it was a warm day and that Haverford was the finest little city he had ever seen, and took his departure.

"Gee, how that man loves clothes," he said to himself as he walked away. I'll bet he's looking at me now to see how my pants hang behind." Which, as it happened, was exactly what he was doing.

CHAPTER THREE

THE next thing on the program was a visit to the Albemarle, which proved to be a fashionable apartment house just outside the business district. MacNider went up to the entrance, and was in the very act of turning in, when he found himself confronted by a diminutive hall-boy with a hard, cold, suspicious eye that was in startling contrast with the cherubic roundness of the rest of his features.

"Where do you think you're going?" the latter demanded.

"I'm looking for a man named Van Tyne," the detective told him. "Doesn't he live here?"

"Yep, he lives here all right, but you can't see him; he's sick. He had one of these here heart attacks this morning, and the doctor says he can't see anybody." At the word "heart attacks" the boy's right eye closed for a moment in a manner that left the detective in no doubt as to the nature of Mr. Van Tyne's illness.

"Red-eye?" he asked, as one man of the world speaking to another.

"Red-eye," the boy returned in the same tone. "You said it, mister."

"Not so bad, that," MacNider thought as, after hesitating a moment, he turned and hailed a passing taxi. "It puts Van Tyne where I can lay my hands on him any time I want to. The question is, though," he went on, as he got into the taxi and started back to the Blanchards, "do I want to? I could make a grand-stand play, of course, tell Blanchard everything and then sit

around watching how he takes it. But I don't see that would do me any particular good. Blanchard's a good scout, even if he does wear an overcoat in the summertime. And Miss Carle's good, too. I wouldn't want to do anything to hurt Miss Carle." The great barrel of his chest rose and fell with the intensity of his feelings. "I guess I'll just have to say that I haven't been able to find out anything about the robbery, which is rather hard, seeing that I've done nothing else but find things out about it ever since I came." He looked out of the window and sighed. "Why did I have to be a detective? Why didn't I learn to drive a truck?" And this question, which was an old favorite of his, was still unanswered when the car turned in at the Blanchard gate and drew up before the door.

MacNider's idea had been to go right in and make his report, such as it was. But as he got out of the taxi it occurred to him that he had better take another look at the trellis. This he accordingly did, scrutinizing it inch by inch and roughly estimating how heavy a man it would hold. Then, with a nod of satisfaction over the way all the pieces of the puzzle now fitted together, he again mounted the steps and rang, and was again admitted by the tight-lipped maid, whose face wore the same acid expression as when he had first seen her.

"I'll bet she just loves chow-chow," the detective thought as he followed her in.

He found the family sitting in the living-room. Mr. Blanchard was now wearing a slightly heavier overcoat, and Miss Carle had changed her dress and looked, MacNider thought, even prettier than before. When he had sat down, to Mr. Blanchard's evident relief, in the same chair he had occupied in the morning, the latter nervously began:

"Have you found out anything?"

The detective shook his head.

"No, I'm sorry to say I haven't. The burglar seems to have got away without leaving any clues." At the moment his mind was intent on the discovery, which he had just made, that Miss Carle had changed her shoes and stockings also, but he managed to appear as despondent as the occasion required.

"Dear me," said the old gentleman, "I'm surprised at that. From the way you went to work this morning it looked as if we could expect something—er—tangible in the way of results." He shook his head and sighed. "I can't help thinking, Elaine, that, after all, it would have been better to send for the police."

"You said that before."

"Yes, I remember doing so," he replied. "If they had been informed at once they might have caught the thief before he got out of town. Twelve thousand dollars is a great deal of money."

"I know it is," she answered. "And if I didn't it wouldn't be for lack of being told. I must have heard it at least twenty times since breakfast."

"But, my dear Elaine, don't you care?"

"Of course I care," she burst out. "It isn't so easy for me to get jewels that I'm willing to have them stolen before my very eyes, but I don't see why I should be blamed. It isn't my fault if Mr. Gray sends us a detective who doesn't know his business."

"Oh, my dear!" This from Miss Carle, who had caught the look on MacNider's face.

But Mrs. Blanchard was in no mood to listen to protests. She had been first robbed and then criticized. She simply had to vent her anger on some one, and the detective, as she now saw, made an ideal victim.

"How do we know he's a detective?" she went on. "How do we know he isn't a thief?"

"Elaine!" The exclamation burst from both of them at once.

"Oh, you needn't get excited. I know what I'm saying." She looked sullenly at her husband. "Emma saw him come out of your room this morning with something hidden under his coat."

MacNider's face had turned as red as his hair. He had come prepared for a good deal, but to be called a thief, and in Miss Carle's presence at that, was a little more than he had bargained for.

"I admit that I was in your room, sir,"

he said, "but I didn't take anything but a pair of shoes."

"A pair of shoes!" the other exclaimed. "Dear me, I hope you brought them back. I have great difficulty in getting the right kind of shoes."

"Yes, they're in the hall under the hat-rack."

Mr. Blanchard looked relieved.

"But what on earth did you want them for?" it now occurred to him to ask.

"There were some footprints out in the flower-bed below your wife's window. I wanted to see if they'd fit."

"And did they fit?"

"Yes, exactly."

With a dazed look in his eyes the old gentleman glanced vaguely at the thermometer. Then, realizing that there was no help to be expected there, he turned back again.

"Do you think I stole my wife's jewels?" he asked.

"No. I thought this morning that you might have, but I know now that you didn't."

"Then you did find out something?"

"Yes," said the detective, "but it was the sort of thing I didn't like to tell, so I decided to say that I hadn't been able to find out anything at all."

A look of dread rose in the yellowish eyes.

"I'm afraid you'll have to tell now."

"I suppose so," said MacNider, who was anything but pleased at the way things were going. For a moment or two he drummed nervously on the arm of his chair, wondering how to begin. Then he took the plunge. "What I found out, Mr. Blanchard, was that your wife was mistaken when she said she was at home last night at half-past eleven, and that the robbery occurred then. As a matter of fact, she was at that moment going into a place called the Alhambra with Mr. Van Tyne."

"It's a lie! I wasn't doing anything of the kind." Mrs. Blanchard's face and lips were ashen, and she put her hand up to her throat, as if she were choking. "Elmer, are you going to sit there and let this man insult me?"

"No, Mrs. Blanchard, it isn't a lie," said MacNider gently. "I have a witness who saw you go in. He says your veil slipped down for a moment and he got a good look at your face."

The frightened woman glanced around with the desperation of a cornered animal. Then her eyes fell upon her sister, and she drew a quick breath of relief.

"Why, Portia," she cried, "it must have been you!"

"No, Elaine." Miss Carle's face was pale, her bosom heaving. She spoke very low. "I've never gone into a place like that in my life, and if I had, it wouldn't have been with Philip Van Tyne."

"But it must have been you," Mrs. Blanchard insisted. "There's no one else in Haverford who could possibly be mistaken for me." Then, as the other again shook her head, she hurried breathlessly on: "You don't seem to realize what a frightful position I'm in. I stand to lose everything I've got that's worth having. Surely you won't let my whole life be spoiled when a word from you can save me. Portia"—she held out supplicating hands—"please say it was you. You've never failed me before."

"I know I haven't. I've done everything you wanted me to ever since you were born, but I can't do this. You're asking too much."

The other was aghast.

"Then you refuse? Oh, Portia, Portia!" She buried her face in her hands and burst into a storm of weeping that shook her small body as a tempest shakes a house.

At first even this failed to move her sister, for as long as it took her heaving breast to rise and fall some nine or ten times she remained silent, her lips set in a thin line, her eyes cold as stars. Then, strangely enough, she smiled—a queer, bitter little smile that seemed to MacNider the saddest thing he had ever seen in his life.

"All right, I surrender," she said. "You needn't cry any more." She turned to her brother-in-law, who had been sitting in profound silence wearing the look of a man who is brought face to face with a situation too big for him to cope with. "It was I who went to the Alhambra, Elmer," she told him. "I was up and dressed when Elaine

got home, and after she had gone to her room I went down to speak to Phil about something, and he asked me to go and take supper with him in town. I consented, thinking it would be rather a lark. We didn't do anything very dreadful."

For another half minute the old gentleman remained silent. When he spoke it was to the detective.

"As I understand it, Mr. MacNider, you tried to keep this from me in order to—er—spare my feelings. I wish to thank you. It was kindly done." His eyes traveled sadly to his sister-in-law. "I'm so old-fashioned, my dear, that I can't help being disappointed."

"I'm a good deal disappointed myself," she said, giving her sister a peculiar look, which the latter evaded. Then she rose. "I think I'll be excused now. My headache seems to have returned."

MacNider, however, had risen, too.

"Please don't go," he said.

"But why shouldn't I? You've heard my story."

"I know I have," he told her, "but it isn't true."

She drew herself up. "I'm not used to having my word doubted, Mr. MacNider."

"Please sit down," he persisted.

When, very reluctantly, she had complied, he spoke again: "This doesn't throw much light on the robbery, does it, Mrs. Blanchard?"

"I don't see that it has anything to do with the robbery," was the cold reply. "Anyhow, I told you all about that this morning."

"Not all, I'm afraid." His tone was firmer; he was fighting Miss Carle's battle now. "You didn't explain, for instance, how your manicure scissors came to be so dull."

"Why, as to that," she answered with a shrug, "I suppose manicure scissors get dull just like any other kind."

"You didn't use them to cut the screen then?"

"Certainly not. That was done by the burglar." Her tone was bold, even defiant, but the detective noticed that she sat very still.

He ran his eye over his notes and then continued: "You say that the man you saw had very broad shoulders. Was he a big man, do you think?"

"Yes, very," she replied. Then, disdainfully: "Almost as big as you."

"But I weigh two hundred and sixty pounds," he objected, "and that trellis wouldn't hold a man half as heavy as that."

"Oh, well, perhaps he wasn't so very large. I only got a glimpse of him, you know, and I was terribly frightened."

MacNider went on: "Then there are the footprints. I don't suppose you made them yourself with a pair of your husband's shoes?"

"Of course I didn't. If they fit, as you say they do, it must be merely a coincidence."

Again he consulted his notes. "One more question," he told her, "and I'm through. You say you saw the burglar run across the lawn and disappear among the trees. How could you see him? Wasn't it too dark?"

"Oh, no," she replied. "There was a full moon last night."

"I know there was, but it didn't rise till after eleven, so it couldn't have got high enough to shine down on your lawn till nearly one."

The look of fear that had been mounting in her eyes suddenly deepened, but she answered as unconcernedly as before:

"Then it must have been later than I thought. Why, yes, now that I come to think of it, I remember I read a story in a magazine before taking off my dress. So it must have been half-past twelve or quarter to one when the robbery occurred."

Without indicating by so much as the flicker of an eyelid what he thought of this explanation, the detective closed his notebook and put it into his pocket. Then, after pausing long enough to steal a glance at Miss Carle, he turned to Mr. Blanchard.

"As I see it, Mr. Blanchard," he said, "what happened last night was something like this: Mr. Van Tyne offered to bring your wife home in his car and she accepted. Then, when they got into town, he persuaded her to go and take supper with him at the Alhambra."

"It's a lie; I didn't. He's making it all up."

"They had a private dining-room," the detective continued, "and after the meal had been served and the waiter had left the room, Van Tyne simply took the jewels from your wife's neck, and when she demanded them back and threatened to call the police, he told her to go ahead and call, he was perfectly willing. Of course he knew she wouldn't do anything of the kind, because if she did it would get all over town where she had been, and that would be a good deal worse than losing the emeralds. What happened afterwards I don't pretend to know. Van Tyne may have hidden the necklace somewhere and brought her home in his car, or she may have come home in a taxi. All I know is that when she did get home she decided to say that a burglar had done it, and then had to go to work and cut the screen and make the footprints so it would look as if the story was true."

"I didn't, and it *is* true," she burst out. "It was Portia who went to the Alhambra. She just this minute said so. Elmer, you don't believe him, do you?"

MacNider had one more card left in his hand, and he now played it with a flourish.

"We can easily see whether it's true or not," he said, rising. "May I use your telephone?"

"What do you want with it?"

"I'm going to call up the police," he told her, "and have them search Van Tyne's rooms. He's sick in bed, so he can't do anything. If they find nothing, all well and good. If they come across some emeralds, we'll ask him to explain where he got them."

At this she became fairly frantic.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," she cried. "I won't have it. You made that story up out of whole cloth. I didn't go to the Alhambra, I tell you. I didn't, I didn't, I didn't!" Then something seemed to snap within her and she broke down. "Yes, I did. Phil said it would be fun, so I went, but we didn't do anything wrong, Elmer. All Phil wanted was the emeralds." She flung herself sobbing at her husband's feet, and buried her face against his shrunken knees.

The detective looked uneasily at Miss Carle, who replied by glancing at the door. In another moment they were out in the hall with the door closed gently behind them.

"Lord," said MacNider, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, "that was the worst thing I ever did in my life. I'd promised myself I wouldn't, too, but somehow one thing led to another, and finally it seemed like I just naturally had to." He finished the mopping process and put his handkerchief back into his pocket. "I suppose it'll come out all right, though."

"Yes, I think so," Miss Carle replied. "She's all he's got. He'll simply have to forgive her."

"And how about you?" he asked. "Will you have to forgive her?"

"Oh, yes. She'll need me more than ever now." She studied him from under her dark eyelashes. "You didn't believe me, did you, Mr. MacNider?"

"No, indeed I didn't."

"Why not?"

He shrugged his great shoulders. "That's more than I can tell. I just knew it couldn't have been you, that's all."

"Oh, so it was intuition, then. I didn't know you detectives had any use for that."

"Didn't you? Well, you know it now," he chucklingly informed her.

While she was smiling at this he glanced towards the living-room door. "I suppose they'll let Van Tyne keep the necklace."

"Yes, I imagine so. No one in this house will ever want to see any more emeralds."

"In that case," he said, "I think I'll be going." He took a last look at her as he held out his hand. "Good-by, Miss Carle."

"Good-by, Mr. MacNider," she told him. "And thank you—for your intuition."

With His Own Gun

By PAUL ELLSWORTH TRIEM

THE first question Jerome Parrott asked his office manager the morning after his return from Italy was a very direct one.

"Charlie," said Mr. Parrott, "who do you think has been staging those robberies up at Ajax?"

Charles Hobart sat for a moment looking steadily at the slim, erect figure of his employer. Jerome Parrott's eyes were gray and penetrating. He had the Roman nose of conquerors. Hobart knew that a full account of the hold-ups was in order.

"Well, sir," said he, "suppose we begin at the beginning and go straight through? Then you'll be able to form your own conclusions."

At this skilful shifting of the burden of proof Mr. Parrott smiled.

"I think that will be the best plan, Charles," he agreed.

"George Hart was our auditor and general manager at Ajax at the time you left," continued Hobart. "I don't suppose you ever saw Hart, but he was an experienced mine accountant, his reports were always clear as daylight, and he got them down to us on the minute. Nothing wrong with Hart. One night, however, he awoke to find the light turned on in his room and a masked man with a gun standing at the foot of his bed. The robber told him to get up and unlock the vault. Hart didn't obey; the fact is, as he has since explained, he was too scared to move. Perhaps the robber thought he was trying to spring some sort of trick; anyhow, he reached the head of the bed with a leap and struck down with the butt of his gun, or Hart's gun, for in that moment Hart recognized the revolver as one that had been under his pillow when he fell asleep.

"Before Hart recovered consciousness the stranger found the keys to the vault and unlocked the door. It is only a few steps along the corridor from the auditor's living quarters, you will remember. There was quite a little money there at the time, including some that had been brought in by the restaurant people."

Jerome Parrott whirled in his chair.

"Of course we paid all of these people who had left money with us?" he remarked, making a statement rather than asking a question.

"Certainly. I knew you would want that done. Well, that's about all of the first episode. Poor Hart was no fighter, and the shock sent him into a fever. We had to bring him down from Ajax on a spring cot. And then I hired a man named McDonald. Mac wasn't much of an auditor, but he had been employed by various detective agencies, and was recommended to me as just the man to find out who had committed the robbery. I thought you would want that done——"

"Obviously," interrupted Mr. Parrott. "The robber must be found!"

"Well, McDonald went up to Ajax and spent six weeks pawing around. He suspected every one in town, first and last, and had so many trails going at one time that I gave up reading his reports. With all that row in progress we certainly didn't look for a repetition of the outrage, but one night the new auditor woke up to find the lights on in his room and a man with a gun—Mac's own gun, which he had hidden in a holster under the bedding—covering him. Mac remembered what had happened to his predecessor, so when the robber told him to hand over the keys to the vault he obeyed

without hesitation. McDonald resigned next morning."

Jerome Parrott smiled frostily.

"Quite right," said he. "It was evidently no place for McDonald!"

Hobart deliberated a moment, then shook his head dubiously and continued.

"The story of the last robbery is painfully simple. I hired a young fellow named Moody to go up to Ajax. Moody was a revolver expert, and he had a jaw like a granite outcrop. You could see that he would start fighting at the drop of a hat. Well, poor Moody was simply outclassed. He woke up to find himself covered; it was his own gun the intruder held. Moody had read somewhere that a person who knows his own mind can leap upon a man covering him with a gun, and can land one punch before the other, who must wait to see what he is up to, can pull the trigger. It sounded fine on paper, and he tried it, but the man who wrote that article must have slipped up somewhere, for the next thing young Moody knew he was lying on Doctor Becket's operating table. He pulled through, but that's about all."

As he paused the older man turned and faced him.

"Well, my son," said Jerome Parrott, "now tell me just what you propose to do next."

Hobart flushed.

"I cabled you for permission to send an armed guard up to Ajax," he began.

"We'll come to that presently. What else?"

His companion raised his brows and laughed, the laugh of one thoroughly exasperated.

"What else? Nothing else, Mr. Parrott! What would you have me do?"

Jerome Parrott smiled.

"Now, Charlie," he said, "I'm going to tell you why I didn't let you send a guard up to Ajax!"

He paused, and his face settled again into its habitual expression of serenity.

"My father founded Ajax something like sixty years ago," continued Mr. Parrott. "Ajax was his first big venture. It laid the foundations for his subsequent prosperity—and for mine. For that reason, when the old workings became relatively unprofitable and outside people came along and offered to buy us out and bring things up to date, we refused to sell. Ajax is a sort of tradition in the Parrott clan, Charlie. And I know, as my father knew before me, that it is a fine, clean town, with the finest people in the world living in it. Now, my boy, how do you think it would look for me to send a gang of gunmen into that little village? Don't you see that I couldn't do it?"

He looked away, and his glance hardened.

"You can call that sentimental if you like. Maybe it is, but here are two reasons that seem to me eminently practical. Number one: I never hire six men to do one man's work. It is a one-man job to audit the books and tend to the vault up at Ajax. The only problem is to find the right man. And number two: sending an armed guard up to watch the vault wouldn't find the man who has done these other crimes. It would simply scare him away. Now, Charlie, I'm going to have that man. I owe it to myself and to Ajax and to the universe to do so. It might be expedient to let the matter drop, but expediency has never been a Parrott virtue!"

Charles Hobart looked curiously at his employer.

"Would you mind telling me, Mr. Parrott," said he, "just how you intend to go about it?"

"Wouldn't mind at all, Charlie. In fact, I was about to confide in you. I'm going up to Ajax and do my own detective work. You can phone the superintendent that you are sending up a new auditor. What shall we call him, Charlie? Ambler? Amos Ambler? I think that will be fine! And I shall start to-day. No use wasting time! And I'm going to bring back the thief or a piece of him!"

Bike Carrigan, superintendent of plant and operations at Ajax, examined the new auditor dubiously. His report to his wife that night was not favorable.

"Some old Charlie-horse they picked up in a funny store, I should say," he commented. "Got mutton chop whiskers and

a beak like a bald eagle. He says he knows something about mining 'theoretically.' That's bunk. A man either knows mining or he doesn't. Theory is worse than nothing!"

He lighted his pipe and strode out into the street. Five minutes later, as he was passing the little restaurant on the corner beyond the Administration building, the new auditor known as Amos Ambler stepped out before him.

"Fine evening, Mr. Carrigan. By the way, I wonder if you could spare me half an hour or so? If you could come over to my quarters and tell me a few of the things I ought to know about Ajax——"

Carrigan nodded, turned and fell into step beside the new man. Together they approached the ancient, rambling stone building which housed the offices, laboratories and the living quarters of the auditor, and presently were following a dimly lighted corridor. Offices and storerooms opened from each side of the hall, and as they approached the door to the auditor's suite they passed an alcove in which the company's vault was located.

"Didn't Mr. Hobart tell you about the mess you'd be getting into up here?" Carrigan demanded as he took the chair his companion shoved toward him.

"He told me there had been some robberies, but I thought you might add details that he had forgotten. If you wouldn't mind just going over the story from the beginning!"

Carrigan nodded. This old fellow was harmless, after all, and if Hobart had made the mistake of sending him up here, that was Hobart's fault. He began at the beginning and went straight through.

Once the new auditor asked a question. "Did any of these men who were held up observe the robber? Were they able to describe him?"

"There was only one thing that struck him, and that was that his shoulders were unusually broad. Must have been built something like me, in fact," Carrigan said, eyeing his companion coolly. "Of course there are plenty of broad-shouldered men in Ajax; a man needs shoulders to be a miner!"

Amos Ambler mused.

"I think we can exclude the idea of collusion on the part of the three auditors. And it's pretty obvious that it was an inside job; this man, whoever he is, has always struck when there was an unusually large sum in the vault. Have you any idea, Mr. Carrigan, how he would be able to learn of this fact without getting the information from the person in charge of the vault?"

Carrigan met without blinking the level regard of the new man. Perhaps he began to alter his first opinion of the old gentleman's qualifications, but by not so much as a twitch of the corners of his mouth did he betray any real interest in the question.

"I haven't the faintest idea how the robber could have learned anything that goes on in the offices," he replied. "Certainly it would be impossible for me to know any of these things, and I have worked here twenty years!"

Amos Ambler sat for some time after his visitor had departed meditating on what he had heard. His request for a repetition of the story of the robberies had not been prompted by any vague motive. He was in truth beginning a systematic search for a clue to the perpetrator of the crimes, and he hoped that by getting the various men who could have had a hand in the affair to tell him their version of it suggestive omissions or additions to the story of the robbery might be brought to his attention.

Now he frowned and shook his head.

"Carrigan tells a simple and straightforward story," he mumbled. "Either he is very honest or very crooked. I must try farther!"

On the day following this first interview he was sitting at his desk in the quiet inner office overlooking the street. He had finished his day's work. After a moment's consideration he pulled open a drawer and took out a revolver which he had noticed there earlier in the day.

It was a compact weapon with a cylinder unusually long for a gun of its size. Mr. Ambler knew enough of such matters

to realize that this was a very efficient revolver. He was still gazing at it when the office door opened and a strongly built young man entered and came across toward the desk.

"Ah, Mr. Ambler, oiling up the artillery?" the newcomer asked pleasantly. "That's one of those special guns—police models—Mr. Hobart sent up from the city. Did you ever shoot one of them?"

Amos Ambler shook his head.

"I'm not much of a gunman," he admitted. "By the way, Mr. Martin, I wonder if you'd mind telling me about the robberies up here at Ajax? Of course I've heard the story, but I'm trying to get the details into my head. You were working in the laboratory when the first hold-up occurred, weren't you?"

Jimmy Martin nodded.

"I've been here nearly two years," said he. "I can remember as well as I can remember my name coming down to the administration building that first morning and finding poor Hart sitting right where you are now, his head swathed in bandages. He'd had a nasty crack!"

Martin warmed up to his story. He was a better reconteur than Carrigan, with a sense for dramatic values and a touch of dry humor. The elderly man sitting across from him smiled more than once at his descriptions.

"Not much that is really definite," Ambler commented as Martin finished. "No description of the robber——"

"Except that he was unusually broad-shouldered; built a good deal like me, I fancy," young Martin interrupted. "But that doesn't mean much in a town where two men out of three are wide across the shoulder. Well, what do you intend to do, Mr. Ambler? Got any plans for preventing a repetition of the robberies?"

"Nothing that promises much. I suppose I ought to learn to shoot this gun," the old man said.

Jimmy Martin's eyes sparkled. He picked up the revolver and examined it critically.

"I'll teach you," he declared. "Come on; we'll go down into the back yard and rig up a back stop!"

Amos Ambler nodded.

It soon became evident to the inhabitants of Ajax that the new accountant did not mean to neglect any of his direct or implied duties. He practiced regularly with the revolver every evening under the tutelage of Jimmy Martin or of Carrigan, who was one of the crack shots of the town. At other times, moreover, they saw him wandering about the Administration building or its grounds, apparently trying to settle some question that had arisen in his mind.

One noon he approached Martin and Carrigan, who were smoking just outside the main entrance.

"I wonder," he began abruptly, "if either of you boys can tell me whether my predecessors—Hart and the other two—were in the habit of pulling down their shades in the evening?"

Both men stared. Then Martin chuckled.

"Folks don't pull down their curtains at night here," he observed. "We're kind of sociable!"

Amos Ambler seemed pleased by this information. He smiled slyly at them.

"Well, that was where they made a big mistake," said he. "The man who executed these robberies took time to study the habits of his victims. That was how he knew just where to find the revolver which he borrowed in each case. You can wager that my curtains are down at night—all of them except the one in the corner overlooking the courtyard. The spring to that is broken, but no one could see into my room through it except from the other wing of the building itself, so that is safe!"

He nodded confidently and passed on, leaving his two auditors staring after him.

One evening several weeks after this conversation with Ambler, Jimmy Martin finished his work in the laboratory a few minutes later than his accustomed time. He had heard the mine whistle blow, but had worked on apparently with the idea of finishing the task he had begun.

When he looked up presently he was not surprised to find that his assistants had gone. He was alone in the big office.

For a few minutes Jimmy sat drumming

on his desk, a double line of concentration showing between his close-set eyes. Then he stood up and walked noiselessly across to the outer door, which he opened. There was no one in the hall.

He began to whistle and bustle about the empty office. With unnecessary violence he slammed drawers and hauled down roller shades. One of these he adjusted with care, so that it came within an inch—and no more—of the bottom of the pane. Presently he crossed to the outer door, opened it and stepped into the hall. The office door closed behind him with a bang. He went as far as the turning in the corridor, paused and satisfied himself that no one was observing him. Then he went quietly back to the office and let himself in. He pressed the setting button of the night lock just before closing the door.

The young man's first act after returning to his desk was to slide aside a filing cabinet which was placed close to the wall. Behind the cabinet was the end of a steam pipe, part of an obsolete heating system. Jimmy removed a handful of waste packed into the end of the pipe, brought his chair stealthily over into position and seated himself with his ear pressed to the aperture.

Instantly there came to him a thin and metallic voice. The other end of this pipe opened in the paneling in the auditor's private office close to the long-distance phone. Jimmy listened attentively as Mr. Amos Ambler made his daily report to Charles Hobart in the city. Most of the report was of a routine nature, but at the end the eavesdropper caught a significant addition.

"The package came through in good condition. No one suspects anything, of course. You'll be sure to instruct the men you send up with the dummy package, so that they'll know just how to play their part!"

The voice ceased, and presently Jimmy could hear Ambler closing his desk, rattling keys and closing the office door. The young man cautiously replaced the packing and the filing cabinet and carried his chair back to his desk.

His eyes were sparkling. A package had arrived; his keen mind jumped to the conclusion that that would be the payroll currency, and a dummy package was to be sent later with some mysterious attendants——

Under the shade he observed that lights had appeared in Mr. Ambler's windows, across the little enclosed courtyard. Most of the shades in the auditor's wing were down, but Jimmy had an uninterrupted view of most of the old man's movements through the window nearest the main building—the one without the shade.

The auditor was going through his nightly routine: calisthenics and stretching exercises; then a sound of splashing water from the bathroom. The old man had his shower bath every evening before going to dinner.

Next came gun practice. Ambler was evidently standing in front of a long mirror, invisible to the spy. He had a revolver in his right hand, and for five minutes he practiced throwing it up, catching the sights quickly and occasionally snapping the hammer. Then Jimmy saw him take the cartridges from the top of the dresser and fill the cylinder. Ambler crossed over and slipped the gun under his pillow.

The lights across the courtyard were snapped off. Mr. Ambler was going to dine. Jimmy settled himself back in his chair and prepared to get a few winks of sleep. He would need them before the night was finished.

Occasionally he aroused himself and consulted the illuminated dial of his watch or peered under the roller shade. The windows were still dark in the opposite wing. Then for a time he slept.

When Jimmy Martin awoke it was to a consciousness of words spoken clearly and deliberately in the room across the yard.

"So, you see," Amos Ambler was saying, "I knew from the beginning that it was an inside job. Moreover, I was certain all along that it was a one-man job. How did I know that? Well, remember that in every case the victim was held up with his own gun. The bandit did that so that the incriminating evidence of a weapon would not be found upon him if he should be discovered and searched, coming or going. Now it is reasonable to suppose that a man who is brainy enough to figure out a detail

like that will also have intelligence enough to keep the entire matter in his own minds and hands. Obviously I was up against a brainy antagonist!"

Jimmy smirked. Brainy—that was the right word. He acknowledged it.

Amos Ambler seemed to have turned away from the window, and the eavesdropper missed the next sentence. Also the voice of Ambler's companion failed to carry across the enclosed yard. This angered Jimmy. They were two to one against him, and he wanted to know who this second antagonist was.

Again the voice of the auditor reached him clearly. He seemed to have shifted his position.

"Would like to have caught him single-handed, but I'm getting old. So I framed this plant. The money will come up, accompanied by an armed guard. It won't be real money, you know; the payroll currency came to-day, but this dummy package will look real. The guard will start back with the stage, but a mile beyond town they have orders to get out. They are to wait in the ravine till dusk and then watch their chance for slipping in here. I will hide them in my quarters——"

Jimmy Martin felt the room revolving slowly, with himself as the centre of revolution. But for this chance eavesdropping he might have walked blindly into the net! He ground his teeth.

Then his mind cleared. The payroll money had come up this very day from the city, and it would now be either in the vault or hidden in Ambler's room. He would strike to-night, when the blow would be utterly unexpected! He would turn the old man's preparations against him!

A dog howled somewhere across the little town. A mine pump was throbbing. Jimmy cautiously applied both eyes to the gap below his curtain and saw that the courtyard was filled with white moonlight. The rhythmic breathing of a sleeper in the first heavy slumber of the night came to him from Amos Ambler's quarters, which were dark. His watch showed him that it was nearly midnight.

Jimmy shivered.

"By heck!" he told himself, "for two cents I'd cut this business and go to bed! I feel like I was the last man on earth and something might reach down out of the ceiling and grab me!"

The formulation of his uneasiness steadied him, however, and he opened the door and slipped into the hall. He reached the back entrance of the building, opened and closed the door and stood for a moment breathing in the cool, sweet air of midnight.

Again he shivered. The feeling was on him strongly that something might go wrong, but a hasty consideration of his simple plan of operation convinced him this was impossible.

Next moment he had stepped across to the bathroom window. The window was open. Jimmy pulled himself up and peered over. The silhouette of his own head and shoulders showed against the luminous white of the moonlit floor. He rested one foot on an angle of the coping and was quickly in the room. Here he paused to adjust a mask. Then he was flat on the floor, writhing silently toward the bed.

When Amos Ambler awoke he lay for a time with his eyes open, blinking stupidly up at the masked figure that confronted him across the foot of his own bed. The intruder held a gun—the auditor's own official revolver, Ambler realized—and he was speaking in a hoarse and obviously disguised voice.

"I want your keys!"

The old man sat up. Deliberately he threw back the covers and slipped out of bed. His gray eyes rested unblinkingly on the glowing eyes of the bandit.

"Stay where you are, you old fool!" the robber growled, motioning suggestively with the muzzle of the gun.

Mr. Ambler stared at the ends of the heavy bullets, coming just level with the front of the cylinder. He knew that this revolver was one of the most powerful made, weight and size considered. And he had reason to believe that the man who had stolen it from under his pillow was fully acquainted with its manipulation.

Nevertheless he stood up, took a step toward the robber and another; then his hand went out toward the top of his dresser, upon which rested a heavy cut-glass water bottle.

"Throw up your hands! Why do you think—all right! Take it, then! You would have it!"

With a steady pressure the thief crooked his finger around the trigger. The hammer of the revolver rose and fell. There was an explosion, not the ordinary report of revolver fire, but a crashing, nerve-shattering roar. The gun seemed to disappear from the bandit's hand, and the latter was suddenly blotched with crimson. In the same instant the man with the mask threw up both arms and fell backward.

When Jimmy Martin opened his eyes he found himself lying in a storeroom adjoining the main hall of the Administration building. On the foot of his cot sat the sheriff of the county.

"Well, Jimmy," a familiar voice said, "that was about the best shooting you ever did, I expect! You got one thumb and pretty near blew your head off! I hadn't figured on the hammer flying back; knew I'd have to take a chance with your fingers. Had to risk something, you know!"

Slowly the bandit twisted his aching neck. Amos Ambler was sitting in an easy-chair beside his cot, smiling genially at him.

"You—you——" he fumbled, searching for a question he wanted to ask.

"Yes, I did it; plugged the barrel, pounded a copper slug into it from the cylinder end, Jimmy, so it would be sure to blow up. That was an extra gun Hobart sent up from the city. We've been practicing with its mate. Of course I wanted you to feel familiar with it, so you wouldn't bring a gun of your own. Not much chance of that, and your system wasn't a bad one, as systems go!"

Jimmy moved his lower jaw experimentally. Then he stared at the older man.

"But I heard you talking over the phone; I was listening——"

"At the other end of the steam pipe? I thought you would be. No one seemed to have noticed what a good conveyor of sound that pipe would make, but I knew the man who was pulling off this business was getting inside information in some way. So I took pains to learn where that pipe which opened close to my desk terminated. When I learned that I began to think you might be the man I was looking for. Of course that message to-night was a pure fake."

Jimmy Martin began to have a premonition.

"Say," he demanded, "who were you talking to in your rooms, just before you went to bed to-night? I heard you giving the whole business away to some one."

The old man smiled placidly. Slowly he closed one eye, regarding Jimmy quizzically through the other.

"My son," said he, "you ought to be able to figure that out for yourself. I wanted to catch you without assistance. You can understand that when I tell you that my name isn't Ambler; it is Parrott, and I am the person you have been robbing all this time. Well, put yourself in my place. I've come up here to catch you. There are certain ideas I want you to get. I know that you are listening across the little yard that separates your office window from my bedroom window. Now, who should I detail these things to? Whose judgment and discretion should I trust in this emergency? Can't you see that there is just one person available? Ah, I see that you are beginning to guess. And you are right. I was talking to—myself!"

Defeating the Currency Raiser

By CARL H. GETZ

THE arrest of an international gang of counterfeiters in New York and abroad recently reminded the American people that the counterfeiter is still with us. For some reason there has grown up the idea that counterfeiting is a crime of the past. It is and it isn't. One hears little or nothing about the counterfeiting of coins, and it is commonly known that the counterfeiting of United States Government currency is on the decline, although there is still considerable of it, but there is still considerable raising of Federal Reserve banknotes. This is particularly surprising because a little memory work will completely defeat the raiser of Government notes.

Sixty per cent. of the United States currency in circulation is in the form of Federal Reserve banknotes. Ninety-nine per cent. of the raised notes in circulation are these same notes. On each note there is an identifying portrait which any schoolboy should be able to recognize quickly. Crooks are able to change the figures and the letters on notes, but they can't change the portraits. So then, when a $2 bill comes along with a picture of Thomas Jefferson on it, chances are you have a raised note. These are the portraits which appear on the different Federal Reserve Bank notes:

$1—Washington.
$2—Jefferson.
$5—Lincoln.
$10—Jackson.
$20—Cleveland.
$50—Grant.
$100—Franklin.

Most people don't believe there are any notes for over $100, but it is interesting to record here the portraits that appear on the larger notes:

$500—Marshall.
$1,000—Hamilton.
$5,000—Madison.
$10,000—Chase.

Banks and merchants should urge their tellers and cashiers to memorize this table of portraits. Once it is memorized there will be very little passing of raised currency.

As a result of the constant agitation on the part of the Secret Service division of the United States Treasury Department that bank tellers and cashiers and others who handle money should memorize this table of portraits, crooks recently tried something new. They raised a $1 to a $5 and then took the portrait of Lincoln and pasted it on the raised $5 note. So they had a $1 bill raised to $5 with the correct portrait. Next they pasted the picture of Washington from the $1 on the $5. In other words, they had a good $5 bill with the wrong portrait. This work was expertly done. It required more than a second glance to note that the changes had been made.

A New York banking syndicate recently offered the banks of the country a four-page leaflet containing the portraits which appear on the different Federal Reserve Bank notes. It is proposed that banks shall distribute this with their own imprint upon it to each of their depositors at the time checks are returned. Chief W. H. Moran, of the United States Secret Service, has pointed out over and over again that the memorizing of these portraits is just about all that is necessary to defeat this particular type of criminal.

The arrest during the past few weeks of thirty counterfeiters in this country and

thirteen abroad, members of the same gang, and the breaking up of a scheme to circulate millions of dollars in counterfeit currency, internal revenue and Treasury stamps and prohibition blanks, recalls to the minds of the old-timers of the United States Secret Service the famous counterfeit plot of 1869.

On a certain day in December, 1869, a former Confederate soldier who had served in the Civil War with creditable valor, by the name of Colonel Hauston King, of the Kentucky Artillery, appeared in Washington, and before United States Commissioner James Blackburn swore to the following:

"I, Hauston King, being duly sworn, do depose and say that I am a resident of Elliot County, Kentucky, and by occupation clerk of the circuit court of said county. I was colonel of artillery in the Confederate army, and in the month of December, 1865, went from New Orleans to New York by steamer, and upon this passage met with Harlow J. Phelps, a merchant of New Orleans. Phelps represented that he was bound to New York to be present at the secret organization of a repudiating party, looking to the repudiation of the national debt. Upon arriving in New York, Phelps and myself met some two hundred men from all sections of the country, south and north; and this party was organized and commenced operations. H. J. Sneed, of St. Louis, was chosen president, and A. H. Sinclair, of New York, secretary. The initiation fee was $150 and the total capital to be raised was $500,000; and this amount was raised in four days. The money was to be used in obtaining the genuine U. S. Government plates for printing legal tender notes. The plates were so obtained, and $60,000,000 were represented to me as having been printed from those plates. I have received $500 of this issue already, myself, and about $20,000,000 of this sum has been put upon the country. With this fund the genuine plates have been secured for making legal tender notes, bonds and national bank notes. Of these we issued the full amount of the national debt of the country. Only about four millions have as yet been put in circulation. The plates are partly in Montreal, Canada, and part are in New York. There was a reorganization of this party on the 1st and 2d of November in 1869, in New York City, at which I was present, when Frank P. Blair, of Missouri, was chosen president, with power to appoint a secretary. The original stockholders numbered four hundred. The number now greatly exceeds this. I am the agent for the Ninth Congressional District of Kentucky. I have perfected branch organizations in every county in said district. . . . I give this information voluntarily and solely for the benefit of the Government.

(Signed) "HAUSTON KING."

This affidavit was duly subscribed and sworn to before Judge Blackburn and attested by three witnesses in his presence, according to law. Colonel King resigned as clerk of the Elliot County Circuit Court and offered his services gratuitously to the Government in the hope that this gigantic plot might be broken up. In addition Colonel King placed at the disposal of the Government all of the data he possessed about the secret society. Included was a copy of the by-laws which set forth these reasons as to just why the society was organized:

". . . to obtain compensation for the billions in value of property destroyed by the Radicals in the South during the late war, and to force on the Government entire repudiation."

The order was designed by the initials K. G. C., Knights of the Golden Circle, and those admitted into the circle were bound by a series of oaths never to reveal the secrets of the order. Death was the penalty for violation of any one of these oaths.

Investigation by the United States Secret Service revealed the fact that Colonel King was a man of undisputed reputation, that he had had a brilliant war record, that he had actually been recommended for promotion by Generals Robert T. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. In addition Colonel King retained one of the ablest and best-known attorneys in Kentucky to help him to make amends for the terrible mistake he

had made in participating in this colossal plot against the Government.

Some time previously the Government at Washington had had an intimation that certain legal tender and bond plates had been removed from the department, impressions made and the plates replaced. When certain counterfeit notes found their way back to the Treasury Department the Secret Service began to organize for a nation-wide fight against what was without doubt the most brazen plot ever planned against the United States Government.

Operators in all parts of the country were given their instructions and then they went to work, but they could learn nothing. A few counterfeit notes were picked up here and there, but there was no way of telling whether these particular notes had been placed in circulation by the Knights of the Golden Circle.

Judge Wm. A. Richardson, of Massachusetts, was acting secretary of the treasury at the time, and he personally headed up the investigation. The more he investigated the less he learned. Report after report came in from the field, but in none of them was there anything definite.

In the meantime Colonel King continued to keep the Government informed of the plans and movements of the order. He was invited to come to New York and meet Colonel Whitley, then chief of the Secret Service. Colonel Whitley listened to Colonel King patiently and attentively, and the more he listened the more suspicious he became, but he said nothing to indicate what he thought.

Several weeks rolled by, and Colonel King appealed to the Government for protection. He said that members of the order had learned in some way that he had told all to the Government and that his life was in danger. Colonel King explained that if he could be assured of protection he could visit at least fifty of the members of the order in New York and could report full details to Colonel Whitley. The latter promised Colonel King that his life would be amply protected and added that a carriage would be ready the following day to take him wherever he wished to go.

The next day Colonel King was driving around, with a Secret Service operator holding the reins. That night when the operator reported to Colonel Whitley he was asked:

"Well, where did you go?"

"From City Hall to the Croton Aqueduct (now Forty-second street and Fifth avenue, where the public library stands) and thence to Greenwood Cemetery and back," replied the operator.

"Just what I thought," said the chief.

When Colonel King returned to report to Colonel Whitley he said:

"I saw a hundred members of the order during the day. And not one of them dreamed that he had been sold out to the United States Government."

Colonel Whitley said nothing.

Colonel King returned to his rooms and proceeded to write and wire friends in Kentucky that the Government had rewarded him with a gift of $1,000,000 for the disclosures he had made. He said, too, that Colonel Whitley had advised him that his services were necessary to the successful conduct of the United States Secret Service.

A few days later Coloney King reported that he was receiving threatening letters all day long. An examination of the letters revealed that Colonel King himself was writing them and sending them to himself. Colonel Whitley thought it was time to act. He at once went to Colonel King's rooms and found him frantic.

"They are going to kill me!" he cried. "They are going to kill me!"

As he talked he pulled at his hair, and in doing so revealed a long, red scar running, as Colonel Whitley reported it, "from the upper edge of the frontal towards the parietal bone of the skull."

"What's this, colonel?" asked the chief.

"That's where a bullet from one of your Yank's rifles grazed my cranium during the war," responded King.

"I see," said Whitley. "He's a lunatic. I said from the first that he was either an infernal liar or as mad as a March hare. It's so."

A few days later Colonel King was committed to an insane asylum, but it was many

weeks before the Secret Service entirely recovered its breath.

The modern counterfeiter doesn't bother much with currency or money. That's too difficult. He devotes his energies to the counterfeiting of checks, that is, the reproduction of checks in their entirety, including use of the same kind of paper—usually safety paper, so called—same typographical style, same kind of dating stamp, same kind of check writing, devices and finally some signatures.

It is a curious fact that the average merchant will immediately accept a check supposedly issued by the Standard Oil Company or the General Motors Corporation or the Pennsylvania Railroad, when there is no reason why such a check is good. Such checks have been counterfeited in the past. The only protection, of course, is not to cash a check for a stranger.

The question may be asked how the crook obtains the original of these checks. He may steal them from a mail box which leaves the letters exposed, a type of box that should be banished. He may pick up a letter in the hall of an apartment house where letters are left on a table for the guests to pick up at their convenience—a dangerous practice—or he may answer an ad. and send two dollars too much. A few days later he will get two dollars back in the form of a genuine check. Then he proceeds to duplicate that check.

Only certain types of safety papers can be obtained by crooks. One manufacturer of safety paper registers all of its sheets, and only authorized persons may obtain such stock. Another company sells direct to the banks. But there are other kinds of safety paper which can be obtained easily. All of the checks in the $4,000,000 Wall Street forgery were safety paper checks.

Any one can buy dating machines and check-writing devices. So much has been written about the "forgery-proof" qualities of these devices that the merchant in getting a check written with one of these devices is immediately thrown off his guard, with the result that he cashes the check.

A New York printer has discovered that purple will not photograph and that lemon yellow, which is indistinct to the eye, will. This manufacturer has invented a check which will not photograph. When the crook attempts to photograph it to make a plate he discovers, upon examination of his negative, that the original design is lost and that the name of the company issuing the check has disappeared. This check is still in the experimental stage, but it is going to have tremendous influence when perfected. It will completely do away with the counterfeiting of checks, at least of the counterfeiting of those checks so printed.

Counterfeiting is an ancient crime. The counterfeiter tries desperately to keep up with the march of invention and science. In later years the scientist and the inventor has been widening the distance between them and the counterfeiter. The counterfeiter is finding the going harder and harder. But a few years more and he will be through.

FIRST EXECUTION BY ELECTRICITY

VETERAN attaches of Auburn Prison have recalled the fact that thirty-two years ago the first electrocution in the world took place in Auburn Prison as an experiment in the use of electricity as an agent for the legal killing of murderers.

Emil Kemler, a Buffalo murderer, was the convict honored on this occasion.

Newspapers throughout the East sent special correspondents to Auburn and stories cabled abroad described the execution as a bungling job. Next day the London papers condemned it, as did many in this country.

Since then electrocution has been adopted by many other States.

The Double Penalty

By D. L. RADWAY

"SLIM" HARTIGAN came to a sudden pause behind a telephone pole, and peered out of the alley, breathless. Beneath a street lamp half a block away stood the burly figure of a policeman!

With a gasp Slim drew back, reaching for the weapon in his pocket, and tremblingly drew it forth.

Peering out again, his breath coming in short, sharp gasps, he saw the blue-coated figure moving slowly in his direction. Slim crouched closer to the pole, the fingers of one hand clutching it, claw-like.

The policeman had approached to within a dozen yards of the crook, when there came the sudden patter of running footsteps up the block, and in a few moments later a woman rushed up to the policeman, talking and gesticulating excitedly.

Slim knew her errand before she had uttered a word. The robbery he had committed fifteen minutes before at, No. 10 Woodlawn Drive, had been discovered!

Listening with bated breath, he heard the policeman questioning the woman; then the two hurried away and vanished around a corner.

Slim exhaled a pent-up sigh of relief.

"It ain't healthy for me around here," he muttered. "I gotta be movin'."

He was about to emerge from his place of shelter and beat a hasty retreat, when a sound from behind caused him to shrink back in apprehension. Flattening against the telephone post, his heart thumping a wild tattoo, he waited.

Save for an occasional dim light here and there, the alley was in darkness, but the catlike eyes of the burglar could make out a shadowy figure moving stealthily in his direction.

A few moments later a man laboring under great excitement hurried up the alley and peered out.

Slim stood motionless. The other jerked a mask from his face and thrust it into his pocket. Casting swift glances up and down the intersecting street, the man stepped from the alley and darted away.

"Looks like one of the profesh," Slim muttered huskily. "Reckon it ain't no healthier for him around here than for me! I'll keep an eye on the bird an' see where he flits to!"

He followed the other swiftly.

After a dozen blocks of pursuit the quarry presently brought up before a tenement building in a disreputable quarter of the city. The ramshackle structure, inhabited by a polyglot tenantry, backed up to the river; the rear of the building skirted the water's edge.

Slim watched his quarry disappear within, and a minute later was cautiously shadowing him up a flight of rickety stairs.

On the third floor the man reached the last door at the end of a dimly lighted hall and inserted a key in the lock. He paused a moment, glancing about unsteadily, then vanished within.

"So that's his roost, eh?" Slim muttered acridly. "He's a strong-arm, all right. Must've cracked one of them swell cribs on Woodlawn Drive, like what I did, an', judgin' by his actions, he got away with some juicy pickin's—which I didn't!"

Descending the stairs with cat-like swiftness, Slim emerged from the tenement and slipped down the shadowy street. Fifteen minutes later he admitted himself to his own room, and in a none-too-respectable lodging-house.

After locking the door and lighting the gas, he dipped eagerly into his pockets and

brought forth an assortment of jewelry, which he laid on the table.

A glance told him that the "pickings" were of insignificant value and not worth the risk he had taken to get them. Evidently Madame Who-ever-she-was, of Woodlawn Drive, had worn her more favored ornaments that night, leaving only a few odds and ends lying about the house.

Epithets fell from Slim's lips as he examined the trinkets one by one and tossed them aside.

"Junk!" he exclaimed disgustedly.

His thoughts again reverted to the man he had trailed to the river tenement.

"Wonder what that guy got?" he muttered speculatively. "He certainly must've grabbed off some real stuff, by the way he was actin'!"

For a long time he sat in meditative silence, glowering sullenly at his own meager pickings; then his fist crashed down on the table, scattering the jewelry helter-skelter.

"I'll watch to-morrer's papers," he said, "an' see what he got away with!"

In his retreat in the river tenement "Slick" Morton, the other crook, who was an expert safe-blower, sat hunched under a gas jet, rereading, for the dozenth time, a newspaper article that was already indelibly impressed on his mind. It told of the robbery the previous night of the Bryant home at No. 15 Woodlawn Drive and the finding of Henry Bryant's body near the rifled safe.

The room, according to the paper, showed evidences of a terrific struggle, but the thief had left no clue to his identity. Slick's victim had been found by one of his servants, who had returned home late after an evening out. The other servants and members of the Bryant family had slept undisturbed while the dramatic series of events transpired in the library.

The paper also detailed another robbery. The Austin residence had been plundered, a few doors from the Bryants. The job had been pulled off by Slim Hartigan, although nobody knew it.

According to the news sheet, both robberies had been perpetrated by the same thief. It was inferred that he had first entered the Austin home, secured some small trifles and overlooked the valuable jewelry. The police thought he had then crossed to the Bryant home; there the aged owner had presumably discovered him in the act of breaking into the safe, and a fight in the dark library had occurred, with its resultant tragedy.

For the dozenth time Slick shook his head in puzzled bewilderment. He could readily account for the Bryant "job," but the robbery of the other house was a mystery!

Obviously some other burglar had been at work there while he, Slick, had pulled off the stunt at No. 15!

Getting to his feet, he started restlessly pacing the floor, his thin, weasel-like face twisted into a scowl.

In the event of his capture he would be held accountable for both jobs, unless the other crook had left traces of his identity behind him in the Austin home. In that case the other thief would be held accountable, not only for the Austin robbery, but for the Bryant affair as well.

Slick hoped fervently that his mysterious fellow cracksman would be caught and made to pay the double penalty. This would remove suspicion from himself in case the police were trying to associate him with the robbery, and he could then enjoy the proceeds of his haul without fear of detection.

Stepping to the window, he looked out over the fog-enshrouded river, shivering slightly as the damp, chill air blew in his face.

Lights glimmered here and there through the murk, and the lap of the tide reached his ears from directly below, where only a small strip of ground separated the rear of the building from the water. Presently his gaze returned to the room, resting upon a heavy coil of rope, one end of which was fastened to a ring in the floor. In case of fire the rope was to be flung out of the window, and the tenant could descent to safety.

Slick had thought of a more practical use it could be put to. In case of necessity he could use it as a means of escape from the police. Many times in the past few days, since he had rented the room, he had

speculatively measured the distance to the ground, three stories below, and figured the approximate number of seconds it would take to reach it by sliding down the rope. Once on the ground, he could plunge into the river and escape by swimming.

Reseating himself, he picked up the paper and once more scanned the robbery article.

The Bryant job, it stated, had netted the thief four thousand dollars in currency, but he had not fared so well at the Austin home. A few hundred dollars would cover the value of the trinkets pilfered from the latter, while gems worth many times that amount had been overlooked.

Slick's lips curled in a sneer.

"Poor fish!" he exclaimed contemptuously. "A fortune in sparklers right under his nose, and he didn't have the sense to freeze onto 'em!"

He thought of his own rich haul and chuckled. Aside from the one unpleasant incident—Slick shivered slightly at the remembrance of the man he killed—the job had been a comparatively easy one. He glanced at his thick-fingered hands, the backs of which were covered with court-plaster. For an elderly man his antagonist of the previous night had made a creditable showing.

"Game old rooster!" muttered Slick. "In his day he must've been a regular scrapper!"

Tossing the paper aside and dismissing the unpleasant thoughts with a shrug, he got to his feet and tiptoed to the door, but not because he suspected any one of being outside, he assured himself. He had left no clues behind at the Bryant home and felt quite secure.

He listened intently, his ear pressed to the panel, and presently thought he detected a sound as of some one breathing!

"Imagination!" he told himself uneasily, but at the same time he decided it would do no harm to investigate.

Noiselessly one hand dropped to the knob, and the other took hold of the key and cautiously turned it. With a quick movement he jerked the door open.

"Hands up!" came a sharp command from the hallway.

Slick stared at the thick-set figure of Slim confronting him, and a gasp escaped his lips. Slowly his hands went above his head.

"Wh-what d'ya want?" he blurted.

"I'll tell ya when I get inside!" the other retorted and stepped into the room.

Closing and locking the door, he relieved Slick of his weapons, then indicated a chair.

"Sit down!" he commanded.

The latter obeyed mechanically.

"What d'ya want?" he repeated hoarsely. "Who—who are you?"

"Me?" Slim Hartigan emitted a chuckle. "I'm the gent what pulled off the stunt last night at No. 10 Woodlawn Drive!"

"Eh?" Slick gasped out the word incredulously. "You—what?"

"Nix on the stall stuff!" Slim returned impatiently. "You kin lower your mitts now, but don't start nothin'!"

Slick obeyed dazedly.

"I've dropped in to make you a business call," went on Slim in a sibilant tone. "I figger we ought to get together without no trouble an'——"

"Wh-what d'ya mean—business call?" Slick interjected uneasily. "An' what d'ya mean by sayin' you pulled off a stunt last night at No. 10 Woodlawn Drive? I don't get you!"

"Don't, eh?" Slim retorted acridly. "Well, then, I reckon as I'll have to wise you up. Last night I seen you sneak out of the alley back o' them swell houses on Woodlawn Drive an' recognized you as one o' the profesh. I was plastered up agin a telephone pole at the mouth of the alley, an' you went by me, yankin' a mask off an' beatin' it up the street. I follered you here!"

The color had drained from Slick's face, and his eyes darted about wildly.

"You—you saw me come—come out of the alley?" he muttered.

"Sure thing!" answered Slim with a chuckle. "An' I read about the Bryant job in the mornin' papers!" he added significantly.

Slick controlled himself with an effort.

"Well, and supposing you did see me?" he demanded. "Wh—what d'ya want, an' what's your graft?"

"Half of the swag!" returned Slim with emphasis. "The four thou you lifted has got to be split fifty-fifty!"

Slick jerked back in his chair, then leaped to his feet.

"You—you——" he stuttered.

"Sit down!" snarled Slim. "Another move like that an'—— He thrust the muzzle of the weapon forward menacingly. "I ain't standin' no foolishness!"

Slick sank back in his chair, his face twitching.

"Now," said Slim, "let's get down to business! You got the stuff here, an' the sooner you dig it up the better."

"It ain't here!" shouted Slick. "I planted it somewhere else!"

"You lie!" snarled Slim. "It's here"—he got to his feet—"an' I'm goin' to find it!"

As he spoke he removed his eyes from Morton for an instant and the burglar rushed at his caller.

In a flash Slick was upon him. The table went over with a crash, and the two struggled furiously up and down the room. Slick wrenched the automatic from his antagonist, but the latter's hands instantly closed about his throat. Not caring to bring the police on the scene with a shot, Slick fought desperately to free himself, but the other's fingers slowly tightened, giving him a taste of the medicine he had given his victim of the previous night.

Slick's fingers slowly relaxed, and the gun thudded to the floor.

"Le' go!" he gurgled. "The stuff's—here—in the room! I'll split fifty-fifty—with—you—if——"

"Too late!" the other came back with a snarl. "I'm goin' to have it all!"

Slick fell in a heap and did not move.

Slim listened intently at the door for several minutes, then tiptoed to the huddled figure on the floor and bent over it.

He ran his fingers shakily through the victim's clothing in search of the money, but it was not there. Then he stepped to the window and peered out nervously, his hands gripping the sill.

Fog still enshrouded the river and lights glinted eerily through the murk. The lap of the tide reached his ears dismally.

Earlier in the evening he had had a look at the rear of the building and gotten the lay of things. He also had found that the rooms on the first and second floors beneath the one he was in were tenantless.

Turning from the window, he jerked a quilt from the bed and worked swiftly. The coil of fire-escape rope served him also. Presently he finished his task.

Creeping to the door, he again listened intently. No sound reached him from without, and with a breath of relief he slunk back to finish the none-too-pleasant job that confronted him.

Lifting the quilted burden to the window sill, he paused a moment, bracing himself, then lowered it out the window. Presently the rope hung taut over the ledge, straining at the ring in the floor.

Breathing hoarsely, Slim wiped the sweat from his face; then he threw a leg over the sill and, grasping the rope with both hands, slid down.

Ten minutes later the river received into its depths another grim secret, to be whispered by the dark, rushing waters and the lap-lap of the tide.

Back in Slick's room on the third floor Slim began a systematic search for the money. For an hour he worked tirelessly, looking in every conceivable place where it might have been secreted—the bed and bedclothing, every article of furniture, every inch of the floor and walls, but the search revealed nothing.

Finally, unnerved and exhausted, he gave up in despair and slunk from the building.

Heartsick, haunted by vague fears, he reached his own lodging-house and crept up the flight of rickety stairs to his room.

Producing a key from his pocket, he was shakily fitting it into the lock when a step sounded behind him. Whirling, he looked into the muzzle of a revolver in the grasp of a stern-faced man whom he instantly recognized as a detective.

"Hands up!" the other commanded tersely. "You're under arrest!"

Slim stared dazedly for a moment, then mechanically raised his arms.

"What—what for?" he blurted.

"For the robbery of the Bryant and Austin houses," answered the detective shortly, "also the murder of Henry Bryant!"

"It's a lie!" cried Slim as the plainclothes man relieved him of his weapons. "Where is your proof?"

"Fingerprints," replied the other succinctly, "in the Austin home; there's plenty of proof!"

Slim shrank back, shaking and cowering.

"I admit I pulled off the Austin job," he whined, "but I—I didn't have nothin' to do with the Bryant business!"

"I suppose not!" retorted the detective sneeringly. "You can prove it, of course?"

"Sure I kin prove it!" the crook came back defiantly. "I kin prove it——" He broke off, a deathly pallor sweeping his face.

In a flash it had come to him that there was no possible way of proving it! If he confessed that he had "done for" the rich man's slayer and consigned Slick Morton to the river, that wouldn't prove him innocent of the Bryant crime! And what evidence could he produce to prove that Slick Morton had committed the Bryant murder? The police would believe him guilty of both jobs and think that he was trying to lay the Bryant slaying on the man that he himself had cold-bloodedly slain! In any event he would swing—if not for the Bryant murder, then for Slick Morton's!

"I didn't have nothin' to do with the Bryant job!" he again protested frantically. "I swear that I didn't have nothin'——"

"Where is the money?" cut in the detective impatiently. "The four thousand dollars in currency?"

"I ain't got it!" cried the prisoner. "I never laid eyes on the stuff in my life, s'help me!"

"Come on!" said the detective, seizing him by the arm. "You can tell that to the judge!"

Jail and trial followed, and to the crook's horror he was found guilty on circumstantial evidence.

Slim paid the penalty for both jobs, but the money was never recovered. The river alone knew the secret.

Slick Morton had taken the money with him, carefully sewed in the lining of the quilt that Slim Hartigan had wrapped around his body before sinking it in the dark, rushing waters.

A BLACKMAIL SCHEME

CHARGED with attempting to extort $10,000 from John L. Bushnell, president of the First National Bank, Springfield, Ohio, and son of former Governor Asa Bushnell, Don Osborne, alias H. L. Putnam and Rose Cooley, alias Rose Putnam, are being held in Montgomery county jail, Dayton, under $15,000 bond after arraignment before a United States commissioner recently. Both of them pleaded not guilty.

Bushnell, alleged innocent victim of the plot, avoided newspaper men. He could not be found or was "not in" when attempts were made to interview him.

The Cooley woman and Osborne were arrested recently by Government operatives on formal charges of conspiracy to extort blackmail, with the aid of two others who represented themselves as Federal men, from Bushnell under threat of prosecution under the Mann White Slave act.

Osborne and the woman are said to have threatened the banker with exposure of a framed-up charge, but Bushnell refused to pay over the money. Osborne returned to Bushnell's office following his first visit, made another threat and raised his demands to $50,000, Federal agents say. Meantime, detectives had trailed Osborne, the woman and two other men to a local hotel. The two other men are alleged to have represented themselves as Federal operatives but they did not appear before the banker.

The House Where Dead Men Live

By FREDERICK C. DAVIS

PART TWO

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WHITE MARK

REPORTER BOYLE whirled and sped from the drugstore. With all the speed he could muster he propelled himself down the street toward the rooming-house which Jones had been watching. He traveled through the darkness at remarkable speed and as he came within half a block of the house he stopped short.

From the building, carrying a limp form between them, two men came. They quickly crossed the sidewalk to where a purring automobile stood and threw their burden into it. It was Jones, of course, they were carrying!

Then Boyle, in an insane burst of speed, flew down the street again. As he moved the car started off with a lurching spurt. Before the boarding-house Boyle stopped, defeated. Already the speeding car was blocks away and he had no means to follow!

As he looked the distant car lurched around a corner and disappeared from view.

Boyle peered, bewildered, down the street. The detective was gone now, captured by this mysterious duo who spoke the words of dead men into the air via radio. Boyle did not hesitate to reason about the strange state of affairs. He remembered now Jones's last words as they had come over the telephone:

"Look for the white mark!"

Boyle pondered. The white mark—what might that be? Where was it? What was its significance?

Boyle decided that the mark must have been made where Jones was last located. In other words, on the fire-escape.

No sooner had this deduction been made than Boyle had swung into the alley. The rooms above were still lighted, the window wide open. The white mark must be up there, and Boyle decided to investigate.

He gripped the lower ladder and swung himself up. He toed quickly up the rungs and paused outside the window where Jones had been stationed.

There he swept the platform of the fire-escape with his eyes, but no white mark was visible. Then he turned his attention to the wall of the building and cried out in elation.

A foot long, shaped like an arrow, a white mark stood out on the wall of the building!

The mark had been made with chalk or dislodged mortar. Its head pointed to a crack between the bricks where the mortar had been chipped away. Boyle peered into the crack and saw a white, folded paper.

He dug his fingers into the miniature crevice, striving to grasp the paper. Finally, after torturous attempts and failures, he succeeded, and removed from the crack a closely folded sheet of paper. With nervous fingers he unfolded it, smoothed it out and saw that it was covered with Jones's scrawling handwriting.

Boyle read:

"Suspect I've put myself in a trap. Am writing this for safety's sake. Think occupants know my presence. Ask you not to mention anything that might happen to me—keep quiet in paper. Something planned for to-morrow night. Make every effort to defeat plan. Saw man read paper in bulky envelope inside. Apt to be important. Get

it. If anything happens let me go, get police and fight this crazy gang. J."

Boyle reread the note. He had been cautioned by Jones to defeat the plan of these men, yet he had not the slightest idea of what scheme they intended to carry out the next night. The detective had seen the man inside read a significant paper. Boyle must get that.

He climbed through the open window and stared at the various radio instruments. In front of them a sheaf of papers rested; Boyle glanced through them and saw they were nothing but code messages caught from the air. Then he chanced upon a thick manilla envelope and glanced across the front of it.

It was blank. He glanced inside it and drew out several folded sheets of paper. The first was covered with large, scrawling writing, bearing at the top the date:

"May 20, 19—"

Below began the sentence:

"On this date comes the culmination of our plans——"

Boyle knew that May 20 was the next day. He therefore had found the paper Jones had seen read.

Smiling in triumph, he again clambered through the window and climbed down the ladders. Dropping to the alley, with the thick envelope clasped tightly in his hand, he began walking swiftly in the direction of his rooms.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHAT THE PAPER SAID

EARLY the next morning Jerry Boyle awoke with the subject of the revelation of the paper in his mind. He had read it the night before. Again, without waiting to pull on his clothing, he drew it from under his pillow and read it again. The very daring of it was as astounding as it had seemed at the first reading.

The manuscript read:

"On this date comes the culmination of our plans. Six months of work will focus to a crisis at midnight, May 20.

"This is written for the information of each of my assistants.

"Our plan for distracting the attention of the police, the fire department and the greater part of the populace is certain to succeed. We assume that much. Therefore pay strict attention to the directions given here.

"Numbers One, Two and Three will direct their operations at the City Bank.

"Numbers Four, Five, Six and Seven will attack the Third National Bank.

"Numbers Eight, Nine and Ten will centre on the Mechanics' Exchange Bank.

"Numbers Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen on the Mississippi Valley Trust Co.

"Numbers Fourteen, Fifteen and Sixteen on the American Trust Co.

"Numbers Seventeen, Eighteen, Nineteen, Twenty and Twenty-one will direct all their efforts at aiding whatever of the others need their assistance.

"By means of dynamite you will each break into the bank building; by means of our improved acetylene torches you will cut through the safe doors.

"When finished all of you ride at once to the radio headquarters, where the loot will be divided.

"Then disband! Each of us rich, our work is done!

"MONSIEUR X."

Boyle read the note once more. This audacious plan had named every bank in the city except a few small ones in the suburbs. The stupendous scheme, headed by an unknown man who called himself Monsieur X, would mean the looting of every large bank within the city!

Then Boyle recalled Jones's note of the night before. The detective had asked that the affair be kept secret. But Boyle glanced longingly at the bit of paper in his hand. What a scoop it would make!

The sheet of directions clearly stated that the masterful Monsieur X had provided a means of putting both the police and the fire department in a position so that interference from them would not interrupt the execution of their nefarious work.

If such were the case then Jerry Boyle owed it to the city and to the police to ignore Jones's request and publish this astounding statement. It would put the police on their guard—defeat the remarkable plan of this unknown Monsieur X.

And what a scoop this would make! Boyle would be the idol of his paper, of the city. Already he could see a flood of letters from Eastern papers offering him jobs at a higher salary.

He brought himself back to earth. Yes, he'd publish that paper. He owed it to everybody that he should.

He dressed in record time. He had forgotten his want of food upon arising; the only thing in his mind was the all-present desire to get that copy to his newspaper. On this important scoop he distrusted the telephone; he must place the copy himself in the home of the city editor.

Ready for the street, he dashed down his rooming-house stairs. He flew up the street with as much speed as he could put on without attracting undue attention to himself. As he half walked, half ran, a taxi whirred past him, but he paid no attention to it. Then, from a side street, as Boyle approached a corner, another taxi sped. The first turned just as Boyle reached the curb. The other drew close. Then from an opposite direction a motor truck rumbled. Each headed directly for the other; it looked as though a serious accident were inevitable.

And Jerry Boyle found himself closed in upon three sides by the approaching cars!

They swerved. Boyle was locked in a small enclosure formed by the closeness of the three automobiles. He glanced around quickly. And as he moved one of the taxi doors opened and a man stepped down into the triangular enclosure. Boyle whirled upon him, apprehensive. In a flash he recognized the man of the black cat! But before he could move or utter a sound the other lifted a sandbag, cracked it downward on Boyle's head and had lifted the reporter's limp body from the ground before Boyle even began to fall!

All this happened unseen to the passing pedestrians—the three cars shut the enclosed space from view.

Then, in a flash, Boyle was carried into one car, and the next instant the car sped forward. The truck turned and rumbled off. The other taxi went serenely on its way, with every one gasping at the close escape from a collision the three cars had had.

In the first car Jerry Boyle sat limply and unconscious.

Boyle continued senseless as the hours passed. A dense blackness filled the world for him. After the passing of a boundless interval his eyelids fluttered and he moved slightly.

He blinked again, opened his eyes and saw that it was intensely dark. A breeze was blowing across his hot face; he must be outdoors. He rubbed his hands across his eyes to restore his vision and to scatter the fog that was obscuring his mind.

Then he looked around. He was in a park! He reognized it as a small park on the outskirts of the city. But how had he come there? He remembered then the automobiles, the blow on the head. He had been blackjacked again! Then in a flash he remembered the all-important paper he had found. His hands darted to his pocket and came away limp; his grim suspicion proved real.

The papers were gone. They had been stolen from his pocket!

CHAPTER NINE

NO AVAIL

FOR a moment Boyle sat weakly in his seat, his mind wandering dazedly through the realization that his great scoop was gone. It was night now; he had been unconscious the entire day. His head ached

and throbbed painfully. What could he do?

And to-night was the night when the banks were to be looted—to-night at twelve!

He glanced quickly at his watch. It was *eleven o'clock!*

Boyle grunted in a mirthless attempt at a grim laugh. He had played a losing game and Jones—where was the detective? Jones could do nothing!

Beside Boyle on the iron bench lay a rumpled newspaper, and he gathered it up.

Across the top of the front page was a streaming headline:

"THE HOUSE WHERE DEAD MEN LIVE!"

Then followed two columns of material concerning the Empty Shell—its history, photographs of it, the results of an exploration of it which had shown nothing.

Much ado was made of the ghost of the laborer which had appeared the night before.

"WILL ANOTHER DEAD MAN APPEAR TO-NIGHT?"

the paper asked awfully.

Across the top of another sensational sheet other glaring headlines stood out.

"STANLEY JOHNSON DIED TO-DAY; WILL HE APPEAR IN EMPTY SHELL TO-NIGHT?"

There were other similar headlines. A front-page of the *Press,* Boyle's own newspaper, gave little of the sensation; Boyle himself was missing and a less experienced reporter had been detailed to finish the job, with a resulting gain by other papers.

Boyle glanced at his watch again. He had less than one hour to warn the police concerning the wholesale looting of banks which was scheduled to take place at midnight.

Boyle knew that the Empty Shell was but a few blocks from the park in which he had been placed while unconscious. An intuitive prompting urged Boyle to make his way toward that much exploited house.

He turned and strode quickly toward it, reeling a little from the weakness which had resulted from the blow on his head. In a few moments he had come within sight of the rambling structure and paused in amazement.

For ten blocks on either side of the street rows of automobiles stretched—and people crowded the sidewalk, overflowed to the street, filled the yard of the house—at least five hundred of them!

They had turned out in a body to view the walking of the nightly ghost.

Even as Boyle looked car after car approached, parked blocks away, and their occupants walked eagerly toward the growing sea of people. The mob grew visibly as pedestrians and motorists joined the group!

Boyle approached quickly. He saw blue-coated policemen futilely pushing against the surging of the crowd. Boyle counted the number of policemen within view. Fifteen! And there were only sixty on that small town's police force!

Boyle ran to the edge of the speeding sea of people and began roughly elbowing his way through it. Panting from the intense effort, he pushed himself ahead until he had progressed almost entirely through the surging mob. Then, with a final effort, he prodded himself to the front.

Standing, gasping, in a small area scarcely two feet wide, held with difficulty by a row of policemen, Boyle looked for the chief of police. The men knew him as a reporter and allowed him to pass. In a moment Boyle caught sight of the fleshy figure of the chief, who was watching in despair the growing crowd which was rapidly becoming unmanageable.

"Chief!" Boyle exclaimed, halting breathlessly beside that official.

"What d' y' want?" the chief demanded angrily.

Boyle told breathlessly of the impending danger of the night—of the plan to loot the banks—all of them simultaneously—and that ——

"Rats!" snarled the chief in disgust. "You've had a nightmare!"

"Chief, it's pure truth! I swear it!"

"Get out!"

"Get your men and picket those banks! That's the only way you can save them! You've got to do that——"

"*Got* to, eh? How can I, you blazoned fool? I've got every man of mine, with the exception of five at the station, right here taking care of this mob. I *can't* take any of them away! I need *more* men; I can't let *any* of them go!"

"Chief, you *must!*"

"Get out of here, you blithering idiot! I don't believe your crazy yarn. *I can't do it! Get out!*"

Boyle backed away. The chief spoke the truth. His men were having great difficulty in handling the rapidly growing crowd. Boyle's shoulders rounded as he relaxed. He was defeated—the banks would be looted certainly.

A glance at his watch showed him it was *eleven-twenty!*

Then a sudden thought struck him. If he could only locate Jones! The detective could do something! But Boyle didn't know where Jones was, and there were only forty minutes remaining before the appointed time for the looting of the banks. Yes, he had lost.

He began elbowing his way through the crowd again. He pushed steadily, finally, after a tremendous effort, emerging at the rim of the surging mob. Its edge was at least fifty feet beyond the line it had held before; it had grown that rapidly. Not less than eight hundred persons were assembled before that haunted house, and the tiny force of policemen had never before had to handle such a mighty crowd.

As Boyle dropped from the edge of the crowd he suddenly halted, staring at a man who was craning his neck to peer over the heads of the others. There was a grim smile on the fellow's face; he was vaguely familiar.

Then the man turned and walked quickly away, but not before Boyle had recognized him.

It was the man whom the black cat had followed.

Boyle began to skilfully shadow the other as that individual hurried down the street.

CHAPTER TEN

DETECTIVE JONES

THROUGH dark streets, gloomy alleys, Boyle followed the other, always keeping him in sight. The trail stretched out, and the minutes wore on as the two men, far apart, progressed across the city. Boyle, pausing under a corner arc-light, glanced at his watch.

It was eleven-thirty-five—only twenty-five minutes before the time set for the looting of the banks.

Boyle realized that defeat of the nefarious scheme of the mysterious Monsieur X rested solely upon himself. The police, doubting his story, unable to leave the surging crowd by the Empty Shell, were powerless to prevent the catastrophe. Jones was gone. Only Boyle remained to fight them, and here he was, twenty-five minutes before the time set for the crime, following a man who progressed with tantalizing slowness across unnumbered streets!

After what seemed miles of walking the trailed man halted and walked into a small building standing on the corner intersection of two unlighted streets.

An intuitive deduction told him that Jones—Jones, who might be the means of claiming victory for the law—was held prisoner inside that house.

The shadowed man removed a key from his pocket, turning it in the lock of the door and entered. Boyle crossed the street like a flitting shadow and listened intently for the creaking of the lock when the door would be locked after the man who had entered. But no sound of a turning key came. The door had been left unlocked while the other was inside.

He turned the knob of the door quickly, pushed it open an inch and peered inside a barren hallway. It was lighted by a candle at the far end, and the shadowed man was nowhere to be seen.

Boyle entered on his tiptoes. He walked silently the length of the carpetless hall, his heart thumping with fear that he might be detected. Once a board creaked loudly under his treading foot, and he gasped. Then

he went at lightning speed down the remainder of the hall.

Bare stairs led upward; under these a closet was located whose door swung open. Boyle darted inside it and closed the door just as he heard footfalls come from a room across the hall and pause.

Then, after a moment, the man, who must have heard the creaking board, turned and went again into the room opposite.

Boyle remained in the musty closet for an interminable period. Now and then he fancied he caught voices coming from across the still hall. He opened the door a crack and listened intently. He caught a gruff voice—one which sounded very like one of the two which had come over the telephone to him:

"Got you—— No trouble—us, now!"

In the closet Boyle drew his watch from his pocket and peered at the dial.

It was eighteen minutes to twelve!

Then, after a boundless interval, Boyle heard footfalls come from the room opposite and pound down the hall to the front door. He heard the door open, shut, the key turn—then silence reigned.

With a sigh Boyle crept from the closet. He stepped across the hall, cautiously pushed open the door of the room opposite and peered inside.

"Jones!" he cried in elation.

"Jones!" Harlington Jones exclaimed.

The detective was trussed by ropes to the wall—unbreakable ropes, which passed through rings and bound him securely. He was able only to move his head; his arms and legs were fast to the wall behind him. A light jumped up in his eyes as he caught sight of Boyle.

"The knife in my pocket!" Jones exclaimed. "Here! Left one! Got it?"

Boyle had pushed his hand deep into Jones's left trouser pocket and was opening the knife he had found there. He dug its blade into the ropes that bound the detective and eagerly sawed. The keen blade bit through the hemp and the ropes dropped away. In a moment Jones stepped away from the wall, free.

"Fifteen minutes to twelve!" Boyle exclaimed, glancing at his watch.

"Great Scott!" Jones exclaimed. "And at twelve they strike! One of those swell-headed crooks elaborated on what they intend to do while I was tied there. We've got to *act* quick!"

Together they darted to the front door. Boyle yanked at the knob; the door was locked. He stepped back. Jones swung his foot upward with great force and nice precision; his heel caught the lower edge of the lock and tore the rust-weakened device completely from the door!

Then they swung the door open and stepped forward. Next they halted suddenly, staring aghast out the door.

For the man of the black cat was standing outside, with his eyes glittering menacingly and two revolvers leveled at the heads of Jones and Boyle!

For a moment the three stood motionless.

Then a puff of wind, bursting into the house through the open door, swung at the candle that illumined the hall and extinguished it. Utter blackness filled the house!

Two shots cracked out. Jones and Boyle, at the extinguishing of the candle, had stepped quickly backward. The bullets hissed into the woodwork at the other end of the hall.

Then, with simultaneous motions, Boyle and Jones leaped through the door. They fell bodily upon the man outside and bore him, snarling and cursing, to the ground. Boyle wrested one of the guns from the criminal's hand, raised it high and cracked it downward with a vengeance. The detective felt the body of the gunman grow limp under him.

"Got him!" he cried.

"Good!"

Jones pulled from his pocket a flashlight and quickly handed it to Boyle. Then he gripped the limp body of the fallen man and carried it bodily into the room in which he had been roped to the wall.

He propped the limp body against a chair, snapped one ring of a handcuff around the unconscious man's wrist and clicked the other through a ring fastened to the wall.

"Ready!" he called.

Together they raced from the building

and sped up the street. Under an arc they paused an instant and glanced at their watches.

"Eight minutes!" Boyle gasped.

At that instant a lumbering taxi rolled around the corner, and as they called to the chauffeur it paused.

They clambered inside, while Jones leaned forward and yelled an address to the driver. The machine dashed away at fine speed.

"What address'd you give him?" Boyle demanded breathlessly.

"My laboratory!" Jones replied as the car lurched around a corner.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE CRISIS

AS they sped ahead they heard the screeching of a siren and listened attentively.

They were now passing a block from the Empty Shell. Both glanced at the sky and saw that it was red; over the buildings great tongues of flame leaped to the sky and roared deafeningly. Crowds of people surged through the by-streets; the desperate clanging of fire-engine bells and the screeching of sirens filled the air. The hoarse shouts of the firemen echoed loudly above the roaring of the flames. Bedlam had broken loose!

"The Empty Shell is afire!" Jones called.

"We can't stop!" Boyle answered. "That's part of their scheme. The police can't leave the crowds and the firemen must fight the flames! We've got six minutes left!"

They rolled with tremendous speed over the streets. In a moment the car lurched to a halt outside an apartment-house and Jones leaped to the pavement.

"Wait here!" he called.

He dashed into the building, on an upper floor of which Boyle knew the detective maintained an extensive chemical and electrical laboratory. Boyle waited with fearful impatience as the seconds ticked by. Then, after a moment, Jones pounded down the stair again, jumped the width of the pavement and clambered into the car again.

"Third National Bank!" he yelled to the driver, and the impatient car leaped forward again.

Boyle turned his eyes on an object that Detective Jones held in his hand. It was the size of a baseball, of dark-brown glass, and it seemed to be filled with a liquid. Boyle knew better than to question Jones. He held his silence and glanced at his watch.

"Four minutes!"

The Third National Bank lay on the outskirts of the business district, and was the largest banking institution in the city. As the car neared the lighted business district Boyle glanced at his watch again, lying on his wet palm.

"Three minutes!"

Then, to the intense disgust of all in the car, a thick string of traffic surged across the thoroughfare, making progress in the cross direction impossible. The flow continued for a torturous length of time. At length the stream of traffic passed and the car carrying the detective and reporter dashed forward again. They traversed blocks at unlawful speeds, passed indignant traffic officers without paying attention to their upraised hands. As they swerved around a corner Boyle again peered at his watch.

"Still three minutes!" he gasped. Then he held his watch to his ear. It had stopped running!

Down a badly lighted side street they shot, in order to avoid the congested traffic of the business thoroughfares. And as they whirled desperately around a corner the driver cried out in terror, for another car was approaching them at high speed and a collision was inevitable.

Then the crash came—a tremendous shock. Jones and Boyle were thrown heavily forward and were stunned. For a moment they sat dazed. Then they arose and, without even waiting to ascertain the extent of the damage, leaped from the car and simultaneously began racing down the street in the direction of the Third National Bank!

Jones still gripped in his hand that mysterious brown glass sphere.

They ran for what seemed a torturous length of time, panting, gasping, hoping against hope. Would they be too late? And even if they did apprehend the robber of the large bank, there were half a dozen other banks to consider. But breath could not be wasted on speech; they must make the most of their opportunity, and they sped ahead at their utmost speed.

And finally they rounded a corner. Before them a large building stood with the words, "Third National Bank," stretched in gold letters across its front top, but its large plate-glass windows were shattered, a corner of the building crumbled and torn away—*the building had been wrecked by an explosion!*

And the police were unable to respond!

Jones and Boyle raced across the street straight for a gaping hole that had been blown in the side of the building. They squirmed through it. Inside the broken building half a dozen men moved about, their faces masked; they were centering their attention on the large safe of the bank, through the door of which a small hole had been burned! Now the door swung wide open, and the men were moving to and from it, carrying large sacks of coin and bundles of currency.

"Stop your breath!" Jones yelled to Boyle.

Simultaneously the crooks caught sight of the intruders. Their guns flashed upward. But at the same instant Jones raised his arm and threw at them the brown glass sphere.

It curved through the air, struck the floor, broke, and from its fragments a dense fume arose.

The men dropped their guns, helpless. Blinding tears streamed from their faces. They were unable to see and groped about blindly. One of them fired, but the bullet flew harmlessly upward.

Boyle, standing aside with his breath held, saw Jones dart forward, push the helpless crooks forcibly, and one by one crowd them into the open safe like cattle in a pen. In a moment he had shoved the six criminals into the open safe; then, with a huge effort, he swung the safe door closed and triumphantly twirled the knob. The hole they had cut was too small for them to get out.

Then he moved quickly, grasping the bags of money and tossed them through the aperture in the safe door, continuing until every stolen dollar was replaced in the safe.

He darted to Boyle, gripped his arm and pulled the reporter outside. He ran across the street, followed by Boyle, and there halted, tears streaming from his eyes.

"Confound that tear-gas!" he gasped. "I got some of it, too!"

"Jones, what in heaven's name!" Boyle gulped. "What's all this mean? There are attempts in other banks——"

"Whoa! Those men are safe inside that vault until we can get some police to take care of them."

"But the other banks——"

"The other banks are not in danger!"

"But——"

"Damn it, Boyle, shut up! I know what I'm talking about. The whole affair is ended, I tell you! The other banks are entirely safe!"

"Jones——"

"Aw, be quiet! I haven't had anything to eat for a year! Come on with me to that restaurant across the street. In the meantime our friends in the safe will cry their eyes out until the police come to take them to the caboose. Have some ham and eggs on me, will you?"

CHAPTER TWELVE

SEATED in a corner of the all-night restaurant, and resting over their coffee, Boyle said:

"Now that you've sent the police after those men imprisoned in the safe, you might begin to explain."

Jones smiled.

"The Empty Shell is a smoldering heap of ashes now, Jerry. I can let you in on the hidden secrets of that house without even going near it. It is all clear to me now."

"Go ahead."

"To begin with, the Empty Shell was turned by those crooks into a 'haunted house' for the very obvious reason that was made known to-night. Such publicity was given the place by the newspapers that a howling mob accumulated outside the place and the police were taxed to their utmost to control them; then the house was set on fire, which turned out the fire department en masse and gave both divisions of the city's protectory system enough to fill their hands.

"With both the police and firemen out of the way the crooks were free to act unhindered in carrying out their plan in another part of the city.

"Now, as to the ghost. You, a reporter, and me, a detective, were inveigled into that house on the first night the ghost appeared. What could have been a better combination for the purposes of this clique of crooks?

"The ghost has a very simple explanation. But first let me explain several things. The other day, alone, I thoroughly searched the Empty Shell and made some astounding discoveries.

"For instance, in one wall I found a large loop aerial for the receiving of radio waves. I found a small cabinet receiving set hidden in the wall, tuned to a fixed wavelength. I also found a small horn which amplified the incoming voice to audible loudness. That was the 'spirit's' voice. You and I both knew where the words came from; we've seen the sending set.

"Now for the spook itself. It is a clever arrangement of wirelessly controlled devices that makes the 'ghost' possible. By wireless impulses, relayed ingeniously to magnets, the covers of two porcelain bowls are lifted; these bowls are hidden in the walls and filled with chemicals. One was filled with very strong ammonia and the other with powerful hydrochloric acid.

"The fumes of these two chemicals, being very close to each other, mixed and formed a white vapor—a very simple laboratory experiment. This vapor floated out into the room, filling it with fog as long as the covers were lifted. I proved this before finding the bowls themselves by analyzing the power I scraped up from the wall the day you were with me. It was as I said at the time, a common salt, sal ammoniac or ammonium chloride. This condensed from the vapors formed.

"The 'ghost' was merely an image. In the opposite wall was secreted a small magic lantern, also controlled so that the light in it gradually brightened, then suddenly dimmed. A photograph of the dead man, easily obtained, thrown on the cloud of vapor in the room, produced the illusion of a spectre floating about!

"The first night men were in the house to take care of you and me. On the succeeding nights the entire action was automatic, being controlled wirelessly from the room that you and I found.

"To-night the climax came, when the entire police force and fire-fighting force—the house was also set afire by wireless—was unaable to attack the burglars when they entered the banks."

"That's astounding!"

"But that isn't all," said the detective.

"That Monsieur X—is he imprisoned in the bank?"

"He is not."

"Then we've failed!"

"Far from it. Listen: Each of the six men in the bank are men who had committed previous crimes and have got away with them. Not less than four have committed murders and have escaped justice. I know as well as I know you that they are guilty, yet I have been unable to pin the goods on them. The other two are guilty of serious offences. Now, Monsieur X acted in a strange way.

"He organized this gang. He outlined the plan, wired the Empty Shell, issued those orders, suggested who they put into the house for the first night in order to get the most publicity. He planned the entire coup.

"But he lied to them. He gave them orders and directions which helped his aim. None of the men detailed to attack one bank were concerned with what men detailed to attack another bank were going to do. In other words, these six men know nothing and cared nothing about any other members

of the Monsieur's clique. They were wrapped up in themselves. And there Monsieur X played his trump card. You see, there were no more than six in the clique, and no bank other than the Third National was to be robbed!"

"But why?" Boyle demanded.

"Reason this way: The men are now caught, undoubtedly guilty of this crime. Therefore, these criminals will pay doubly for this crime, and for the one they escaped paying for, long before."

"I see. But Monsieur X—where is he? Who is he?"

Jones stared into his coffee cup. "Boyle," he said, "if there is anything I despise it is the crook who escapes paying for his crime and flaunts justice. I hate them!"

"Well?"

"Monsieur X brought these crooks to justice nicely, didn't he?"

"You mean that this entire plan was a hoax to the crooks themselves and that Monsieur X's aim was only to bring to justice crooks who had eluded the penalties for their crimes?"

"Exactly!" Harlington agreed, his eyes glittering.

"But *who* is Monsieur X?"

"Boyle," said the detective, grinning, "I, myself, was Monsieur X!"

And "Monsieur X," thoroughly pleased at the perfect success of his strategic plan, slowly drank the last of his coffee.

THE END

A SIX-FOOT BANDIT

A BOLD 6-foot bandit with a weakness for entering and robbing drugstores, has inaugurated a reign of terror among the apothecaries in the Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, district. Several weeks past three druggists have been held up at the point of a gun while the night prowlers rifled their cash registers, according to information from sources other than the police. In each instance a tall robber, his features hidden behind a black mask, superintends the thieving and disappears in a dilapidated motorcar.

Abraham S. Lundin, who owns a drugstore at 4601 16th ave., was busily filling a prescription when he heard some one entering the front of his store. Looking out from behind his prescription counter, he saw a burly robber with a revolver in his hand waiting for him to appear. Lundin dashed into a small closet in the prescription room and locked the door. When he emerged, several minutes later, the bandit had disappeared and so had $90 from his cash register. Neighbors claimed that they saw two men speed away from the front of the Lundin store in an old-fashioned motorcar.

A similar theft took place in the drugstore of Herman G. Licht at 4426 18th ave. Licht and one of his clerks were waiting on a customer when a tall masked robber with a drawn revolver held up the trio while his two henchmen snatched $125 from the cash register. Apparently not content with their booty, the bandits relieved the unfortunate customer of $50 and took a lone quarter from a pocket of the youthful clerk. The robbers disappeared in the direction of Fort Hamilton Parkway in a motorcar of ancient vintage.

Before the mysterious giant and his companions ceased their activities that night they motored to the drugstore of Carl Faaland at 2903 Fort Hamilton Parkway and removed $93 from his cash register while he remained motionless at the business end of a big revolver.

In each instance the robbery was reported to the police of the Parkville station. The only clue that might possibly lead to the arrest of the tall bandit and his assistants is a boy's cap left behind by the fleeing robbers when they dashed out of Faaland's drugstore. Faaland stated that the masked thief appeared to be about 25 years of age.

The Skull

By FRED H. HAYN

CHAPTER ONE

"MARIE ANTOINETTE was drawn to the place of execution, exposed to the insolent gaze of the populace, in a common cart, with her arms bound, in a prison dress, like the vilest criminal, but calm dignity which had abashed her judges a few hours before did not desert her."

Lying upon a bed in a suit of silk pajamas, Paul Mason grinned as he read the foregoing words from the book in his hands. Instinctively his eyes sought the skull, with its dismal eyes and nose sockets, its yellow, grinning teeth, facing him on the dresser. The top of the skull had been cut away, and the hollows that once housed the vital organs of human sight and smell had been bored through, accentuating its sinister aspect.

The young man shrugged as he returned to the text. He continued reading. The description of the execution was given in detail. Vividly the gruesome scene was depicted: the ascent of the unfortunate queen to the scaffold, the priest addressing her at every step, the adjustment of the fatal plank by the infamous executioner, Sanson, her brusque movement as she trod on his foot, concluding with her last words:

"Excuse me, monsieur, I did not do it intentionally."

"A terrible cry—a shout comprising at once joy, terror, sorrow, triumph, expiation—rose like a storm, as the queen was launched into eternity."

Unconsciously Mason lowered his book; again his eyes reached the grim object on the dresser.

"So you are supposed to be Friend Sanson's skull, eh?" he muttered. "It was you who adjusted the plank for the lovely lady's last ride; it was you who received the gentle pressure of her dainty foot! Hum!"

For a long time he gazed, his thoughts colored by the gloomy incident he had been reading; then gradually his reflections turned to his wager, that he would sleep overnight with the ghastly relic of a bygone day in his room. The skull, it was said, had a hypnotic property, and was certain to produce dire results to one who had the temerity to try its virtues by assuming its companionship for the night.

Mason's eyes dropped back to the book. There came a rustle from the direction of the skull. He stared at it in amazement. Then he grinned. It was merely the wind gently blowing a piece of paper on the dresser! Nevertheless, he had to confess, the occurrence had startled him. With a shiver he lowered his head to resume reading. But somehow he seemed unable to keep his eyes from the revolting thing. There came another rustle, and he half rose.

This time the noise unquestionably had come from the skull. It was louder, and he had been able to locate the sound definitely. He dropped the book. Fascinated, he stared at the hideous object. To his horror, a light appeared in one of the eye sockets—evil, menacing and shining with a greenish luster; then it vanished as swiftly as it had appeared.

Mason rubbed his own eyes, bewildered; then he laughed. The light, he assured himself, was only that reflected from the bulb over his head to the glass of one of the pictures on the wall; a movement of his head, with his eyes riveted on the picture,

made certain his surmise. He resumed his reading.

A few moments later some unaccountable impulse forced him to raise his eyes to the skull. There was the light again, but this time it appeared in the other eye! The frightful skull, with its flickering, greenish orb, seemed to leer at him mockingly.

CHAPTER TWO

MAURICE CLAMART was a collector of curios. Being possessed of an ample fortune, he was able to cater lavishly to his hobby. His wife, Claire, however, did not share his enthusiasm for the mass of "junk," as she unfeelingly designated the miscellaneous assortment of daggers, swords, Malay creeses, maces, battle axes, instruments of torture, including the Iron Maiden, the boot, the gourd, dating back to the Middle Ages, suits of armor—in short, anything and everything redolent of story or legend.

Mrs. Clamart could not be prevailed upon to enter the commodious apartment where the assemblage of odd articles were disposed on the walls, the ceiling or in glass cabinets, placed judiciously about the room. She had a distinct aversion to the articles that afforded her husband unalloyed joy. And when Maurice, with eyes sparkling, brought home a skull, reputed to be that of Sanson, the historic monster of the French Revolution, she gave an exclamation of disgust, not unmingled with fright.

"Maurice!" she cried, "take that horrid thing out of here! I don't want ever to see it again!"

"Oh, pshaw, Claire! Have you no interest in history and legends!"

"Not a bit! On my soul, Maurice, if you don't stop lugging that truck into the house, I'll get a divorce! You should have studied medicine. Your delight in collecting old bones is positively revolting!"

"But, Claire, there is a story connected with this skull! Don't you want to hear it?"

"I do not. Go tell it to Paul. He may be interested in your fool legends; I'm not!"

Maurice snorted.

"I believe I will," he snapped. And he went out, muttering something about "unappreciative women."

He found Paul Mason sitting in the museum fingering the leaves of a profusely illustrated history of the French Revolution. He was a slightly built young man, hardly over twenty-five, and yet there was that about his thin, almost emaciated face that suggested the cynic. He seemed to be one of those individuals who had experienced not only the entire gamut of the joys of life, but also had drunk its very dregs. Young as he was he had seen much of the world. Already he had spent the greater part of the fortune left by his parsimonious father, a parent who in life had denied him everything. And now that he was dead, the son had taken upon himself to make up for lost time. Paul was a very good friend of the Clamarts; they had invited him to spend the week-end at their comfortable home.

"What do you think of this, Paul?" asked Maurice, delightedly holding up the skull.

"Um!" grunted Paul, looking up from his book. "Going to study medicine in your old age?"

Maurice snorted.

"You're as bad as Claire! This, you scoffer, is the skull of Sanson, executioner of——"

"Rot!"

"I tell you this gentleman here," tapping the thing he held in his hand, "is the very one who conducted the fair Marie into the other world."

"Rubbish! How can you swallow such stuff?"

"Listen, Paul; there's a story connected with——"

"Uh-huh. I've heard of such before."

"I'll tell you what I'll do!" out of patience; "I'll bet you fifty dollars you'll not sleep overnight with this fellow in your room!"

"Are you in earnest!"

"Certainly."

"You're on!" Mason took the skull and looked it over. "Hm! Mr. Sanson seems to have had his eyes and nose punched in, and his head is shaved. What's the story?"

"The story is—and it was vouched for by the one from whom I bought it——"

A cynical, sarcastic smile hovered about Paul's thin lips.

"Oh, very well! I don't ask you to believe it! But every one who has ever ventured to sleep with this gentlemen never again opened his eyes in this world!"

"With this—er—skull?" Paul laughed derisively.

Maurice nodded gravely. "You're warned, Paul. Don't blame me if——"

"Calm your fears on my account, Maurice. I'm a bit hard up to-day. The executors of my tightwad dad's will have positively refused to come across with any more coin until next week, when a payment is due. Your fifty will come in handy. You won't mind my taking this book along, will you? I always read myself to sleep."

CHAPTER THREE

EXCEPT for a start of surprise, and perhaps a shudder of aversion, it may be said, Paul Mason was but little affected by his cadaverous companion. He made a move to get out of bed, but fell back with a light laugh. The joke was on him surely. How Maurice would laugh at his expense if he knew!

That the skull was really that of the infamous executioner Mason did not for one moment believe. It doubtless had been purloined from some medical college and had been palmed off on his credulous friend for a good round sum. But the light—that uncanny, green light!

Again came the soft rustle, and once more the right eye of the skull shone. Half-rising, Mason slipped softly out of bed. He stood stiff; the light had disappeared! He shuddered involuntarily.

"Oh, come now," he muttered, "I'm not a coward! I've seen too much of this world to be frightened by a mummied skull!"

He took a step forward. The skull rattled; the light appeared first in one eye and then in the other. Mason stood rooted to the spot. He seemed unable to move. The yellow teeth grinned horribly.

Mustering up all the strength he possessed, he took a step forward. The light was now in the left eye. It flashed and scintillated wickedly, sending out prongs of fire.

All of a sudden the skull seemed to be enveloped in a bluish haze. Presently it took shape, and in the outlines, ever so dim, the trembling young man discerned two coal-black eyes. A flat, ugly nose took form in the fleshless socket, and repulsive, thick lips covered the grinning teeth. A mass of thick raven hair gradually appeared on the top of the head, covered eventually by a ragged cap. The eyes stared at him in all hatred.

Mason shuddered convulsively. Now he knew! The head of the apparition was doubtless that of Sanson; it agreed perfectly with the illustration in the history, but the eyes—the eyes were those of his dead father!

A vertigo seized the distracted man. The events of his past life, the dissipation of his father's money passed in a panorama before his eyes. Something seemed to strike his head; his chest became congested; he could scarcely breathe; he fell to the floor, face downward.

Instantly he pulled himself together and half rose upon one knee. Blood came from his nose and lips, but he felt no pain. He looked at his unearthly visitant with bloodshot eyes. Gradually it disappeared, leaving in its place the fleshless skull. The face did not reappear. "All imagination," he muttered. But now, to his horror, the luminous eye emerged from one eye socket in the skull, trailed down the face of the skull, dropped to the floor and swiftly moved to a corner of the room!

Then followed a frightful spectacle. The young man, crouching upon one knee, with his head thrown back, his eyes staring wildly, his face streaked with blood, foam upon his lips, watched the ghastly light. He

shook with convulsions. Then he felt of his head and something snapped.

CHAPTER FOUR

"WELL, dear," chuckled Maurice as he sat in his den with his wife. "I've had an opportunity to test the story connected with that new acquaintance of mine."

"Yes?" said Claire inquiringly, but without looking up from the newspaper she was reading. "What story is that?"

"Why, you know—the skull."

"Indeed?" indifferently. "And how did you test it?"

The curio collector rubbed his hands.

"I wagered Paul fifty dollars he wouldn't sleep all night with it in his room."

Claire dropped her paper. Her forehead wrinkled into a frown. "Now, Maurice, you know I detest wagers of all sorts. You shouldn't——"

Her words were cut short by a cry, so shrill, so piercing, that it seemed impossible it could proceed from a human being. It came from above the museum in a wing of the house—the room in which Paul had retired for the night. Again and again it sounded with frightful distinctness.

The two jumped to their feet, he confused and mystified, she pale and mute with fear. Into the hall they sprang, and up the stairs at the farther end. He reached the door of Mason's room first, but only a few seconds in advance of his wife. They rushed into the room.

In the middle of the floor, clothed in pink pajamas, lay the prostrate, immovable form of the young man. Together they turned the body over. A fearful sight met their gaze. The face was streaked with blood and foam; the eyes were open wide and staring.

"He must have had a cataleptic fit," announced Clamart. He knelt down and felt of the heart. It had ceased beating. Paul Mason was dead!

Clamart looked at the skull and shuddered. Then his eyes traveled to a corner of the room. "Good God!" he cried. "What in the name of all possessed is that!"

Mrs. Clamart ran to the corner. "It's a big rat! It got caught in the trap I set. The whole house is infested with them. But what's that all over it? It looks like phosphorescent paint!"

"Hm!" muttered the curio collector. "I wondered what had gotten into my box downstairs! The pests have dragged it all over the place!"

RURAL SHERLOCK FINDS ROBBERS' CACHE

THE alertness of a rural "Sherlock Holmes" and his fiancee is believed by the Cop May county authorities to have solved the mysterious thefts of automobile supplies from several stores in the vicinity of Rio Grande and brought about the arrest of two young men, who were held without bail following the location of a cache where about $10,000 worth of loot was found.

The young man told the Sheriff that he and his financee were on their way home late the other night when they saw an automobile turn out of the lonely Bear Swamp road into the Bay Shore road.

"We knew no machine had any right there," the young man told the Sheriff, "so we went in and scouted around. I had a flashlight with me and we tracked that automobile some two miles, then off to one side of the road. Near there, covered up with canvas, was enough stuff to run a store," said the youth.

Sheriff Redding, with Deputy Sheriff Hoffman and State Policeman Jesch, accompanied the young sleuth and found the stolen automobile supplies. Then they waited about in the bushes and saw two young men drive up in an automobile. They gave their names as Joseph Hand of 516 West street, Camden, and George Hedron of 462 Boyden street, Camden.

TAKE NOTICE

THERE is a splendid issue of this magazine in active preparation and we advise all our readers to order a copy in advance, so you will be sure to get one. It will be on the newsstands in two weeks and is going to contain some stories that will please you. The feature novelette is a detective story of unusual merit, and is entitled

"BLOOD RUBIES"

The author is J. Werner Phelps

This story is full of exciting adventures, startling situations, and contains an active detective plot and many dramatic scenes.

The next offering will be the gripping detective sketch

"TRAPPED"

It was written by Lloyd Lonergan

Next, there will be a rousing crook story filled with snappy incidents, with a surprise ending. It is called

"GREEN EYES"

Edgar Daniel Kramer is the author

Fourth in the list is a detective story woven around an interesting plot, under the title

"JUST WITHIN THE LAW"

By Joe Burke

Then there will be a graphic detective story which will hold your attention from beginning to end. It is called

"MY BROTHER'S KEEPER"

Harold P. Montanye was the writer

And you should not miss reading the absorbing description of a criminal being brought to justice in the story

"A BIT OF CLAY"

Written by Joseph T. Kercel

There will also be a new serial, a well written technical article and no less than half a dozen interesting items on all sorts of unusual subjects.

In our next number we are going to make an announcement that will astonish you. Watch for it!

THE EDITOR.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by H. Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by E. Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thomas J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Anderson.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. F. Oursler.
77 "The Little White Room," by Edmund Jones.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by W. Kofoed.
80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "The Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89 "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. F. Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Lost Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaski.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie.
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt.
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.

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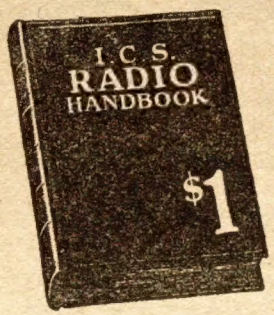

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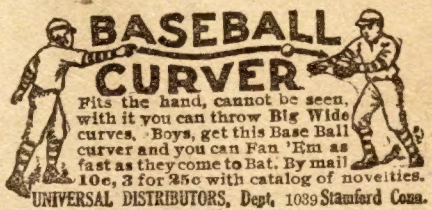

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